The Human Comedy

Honoré de Balzac

The
Lynn Townsend White
Collection
of the
Library of the
San Francisco Theological Seminary
San Anselmo, California

Alcove_____

Stack_____

Shelf_____

LIBRARY
OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
SAN ANSELMO
CALIFORNIA

Lynn Townsend White

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/humancomedy0002juli

"THE TERRIBLE" VAUTRIN.

FRONTISPIECE—BALZAC, Volume Two.

PERE GORIOT.

THE HUMAN COMEDY

BEING THE BEST NOVELS FROM THE "COMEDIÉ HUMAINE" OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

EUGÉNIE GRANDET
THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART
THE SELIM SHAWL
PERE GORIOT
CÉSAR BIROTTEAU
THE MADNESS OF FACINO CANE

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIXTEEN ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD FROM THE BEST FRENCH EDITION

WITH AN INTRODUCTION DESCRIPTIVE OF THE AUTHOR'S STUPENDOUS AND BRILLIANT WORK

BY

JULIUS CHAMBERS

IN THREE VOLUMES—VOLUME TWO

NEW YORK:
PETER FENELON COLLIER.
1893.

PQ
2161
C6
1892
v.2

Copyright, 1893,
BY PETER FENELON COLLIER.

All rights reserved.

Contents of Volume Two.

SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE.

PAGE

1—EUGÉNIE GRANDET. 5

2—THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART.... 93

SCENES FROM CITY LIFE.

1—THE SELIM SHAWL ; OR, GAUDISSART IN THE CITY..... 115

2—PERE GORIOT..... 120

3—CÉSAR BIROTTEAU..... 236

4—THE MADNESS OF FACINO CANE..... 374

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

EUGÉNIE GRANDET:

EUGÉNIE GRANDET—"How complacently she sat at the window."

M. GRANDET.

THE BIG NANON—"Her name had been associated with the Grandet family for thirty-five years."

THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART:

GAUDISSART—"On seeing him everybody would say: 'Ah! there's the illustrious Gaudissart.'"

PERE GORIOT:

PERE GORIOT—"In some he awakened horror; in others, pity."

"THE TERRIBLE" VAUTRIN.

MADAME VAUQUER—"Her personality explained the boarding-house, just as the latter implied the former."

VAUTRIN IN TWO OF HIS DISGUISES—"'The Terrible' was no longer terrible under such an exterior."

CÉSAR BIROTTEAU:

CÉSAR BIROTTEAU—"In talking, he always crossed his hands behind his back."

SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE.

I.

EUGENIE GRANDET.

I.

In the provinces of France are some houses the appearance of which induce the same sort of melancholy as a view of the gloomiest cloisters, the most desolate heaths, or the saddest ruins; perhaps, because in these habitations may be found the silence of the cloister, the barrenness of the heath, and the decay of the ruin. Indeed, life and motion are so inert within them that a stranger would think they were uninhabited, but for the occasional glimpse of a pale and cheerless face peering through a window at the sound of his passing footsteps.

In the town of Saumur, a house of this description may be seen at the end of a street leading up to the chateau hard by; which street—hot in summer, cold in winter, and dark always—is remarkable for the resounding of its flinty pavements, the narrowness of its tortuous course, and the quiet of its houses that belong to the old town and overlook the ramparts.

In this street some of the buildings are no less than three centuries old; and, though built of wood, are still substantial. It is difficult to pass them without admiring the enormous beams, carved at the end in fantastic figures, which crown their ground floors with a black bass-relief.

In some places, transversal pieces of wood covered with slate, mark with bluish lines the frail walls of a mansion terminating in a roof, supported by columns that years have bent, and covered with shingles that are warped by the sun and rain. In other places are worn and blackened window-sills, their delicate sculpture almost obliterated, and which seem too slender to sustain the brown earthern pots filled with the gilly-flowers or rose-bushes of some poor laboring woman; and in other places still are doors garnished with enormous nails where the genius of our ancestors traced their domestic hieroglyphics, of which the sense is no longer to be divined. On this spot, a Protestant declared his faith; on that a Leaguer cursed Henry IV.; and in another place a burgher engraved the insignia of his *noblesse de cloches*, the pride of his forgotten shrievalty. By the side of the rickety house with rough-cast walls, where the artisan gloried in his tools, arises the hotel of the gentleman, where, over the stone arch of the portal, may yet be seen some vestiges of his escutcheon, destroyed by the revolutions that, since 1789, have agitated the country.

Such parts of the houses in this street as are devoted to trade are neither shops nor warerooms; they are, on the contrary, the *ouvrouere* of the Middle Ages in all its native simplicity. They have no signs, show-windows, nor glazing of any sort; but are deep, dark, and entirely destitute of both interior and exterior ornament. The doors are divided into two equal parts, the upper one opening inwardly, while the lower, garnished with a bell on springs, flies indifferently inward

and outward. The air and light reach this humid den by the upper part of the doorway, and through the space between either the roof or ceiling—as the case may be—and the breast high wall, in which are fitted solid shutters, that are removed in the morning, and in the evening replaced and secured by iron bars; this embrasure serves to display the wares of the owner without any charlatanism. The samples consist—according to the nature of the individual's trade—of two or three packages of salt, or fish, or sail-cloth, or cordage, or brass hanging from the beams, or hoops of wire suspended against the walls, or pieces of cloth, etc., on the shelves.

When you enter, a girl neatly dressed, with white neckerchief and red arms, lays down her knitting to call her father or mother, who thereupon appears, and will sell you merchandise to any amount, from two sous to twenty thousand francs.

You may see a lumber-merchant seated at his door, twirling his thumbs and talking with his neighbor—his entire possessions consisting apparently of a few staves; yet his lumber yard at the quay supplies all the coopers of Anjou, and he knows to a unit how many casks he can produce if the vintage is good. A few rays of sunshine will double the man's fortune; a few days of rain will half ruin him; for in a single morning in the vintage, and depending on the weather, his casks may rise to eleven francs, or fall to six livres.

In this quarter, as in Touraine, the vicissitudes of the atmosphere govern commercial life. Vine-dressers, farmers, lumber-dealers, innkeepers and sailors, are all on the *qui vive* for the light of the sun. They tremble in the morning to learn that a frost occurred during the night; they dread rain, wind, or drought, and pray for showers, heat, or clouds, according to the requirement of their respective vocations. There is a perpetual warfare between the pleasure of the skies and the wants of the earth; and the barometer by turns saddens and rejoices the faces of all.

After ten o'clock on Saturday mornings during the fine season, you can transact no business with these honest citizens. Each one has his vineyard or his close, and must pass two days of the week in the country, where they all busy themselves in parties of pleasure.

The good people of Saumur, as indeed of other provincial towns, deal largely in espionage. If a housewife purchases a partridge, her neighbors deem it necessary to ascertain whether it was done to a turn in the cooking. If a young lady thrusts her head out of a window, everybody sees her, and thinks it best to know her motive. The very consciences of the people are common property; and these houses, dark, silent and impenetrable as they are, contain no mysteries.

The inhabitants live, for the most part, in the open air. Each family sits at its own door, and there dispatches its breakfast, dinner, and quarrels; of course, no one can pass by without being the subject of their comments. Formerly, when a stranger arrived at a provincial town, he was mocked from door to door—whence sprung many a humorous tale and the nickname of *copieux*, bestowed on the inhabitants of Angers who excelled in these public civilities.

The chateaus of the old town are situated in the upper part of this street, formerly inhabited by the nobility of the country. The mansion where the principal events of the following narrative took place, was one of these edifices—venerable remains of an age when men and things bore a character of simplicity from which their descendants are rapidly departing.

After following the sinuosities of this picturesque street, which recalls interesting souvenirs at every step, of which the general effect is to plunge the traveler into a sort of mechanical reverie, you perceive a house standing back from the street, and this is the house of M. Grandet.

M. Grandet enjoyed a reputation at Saumur, the cause and effect of which are difficult of explanation to one who has never lived in a French province. He is still called by some Father Gran-

det, though the number of these old men is sensibly decreasing. In the year 1789, he was a master cooper, well-to-do in the world, and able to read, write, and keep accounts. When the lands of the clergy, in the arrondissement of Saumur, were put up for sale by the French Republic, Father Grandet, then about forty years of age, had just espoused the daughter of a rich lumber-dealer; and he repaired, with his wife's dowry and his own fortune, to this district, where, after placing the necessary consideration in the hands of the savage republican who superintended the sale of the national domains, he became the legal, if not the rightful, owner of an abbey, some granges, and the finest vineyards of the arrondissement.

As the inhabitants of Saumur were very slightly revolutionary, Father Grandet passed among them for a bold man, a Republican and a patriot, whose mind was imbued with the new principles and theories of the nation—while, in fact, the worthy cooper's whole attention was devoted to his vines. He was elected an officer of the local government of the district, and his pacific influence was felt in both the political and commercial departments. Politically, he protected the interests of the original owners of the soil, and prevented, as far as he was able, the sale of their lands. Commercially, he furnished to the Republican armies one or two thousand casks of white wine, for which he took in payment the superb meadows belonging to a community of nuns, the sale of which property he had managed to defer until he found it convenient to become the purchaser.

Under the consulate, the good man Grandet became a mayor. He now managed the affairs of the town well, and those of his vineyards better.

Under the emperor, he was styled M. Grandet. Napoleon, however, who was not at all favorably disposed toward Republicans, removed M. Grandet from office (for he was suspected of having worn *le bonnet rouge*), and gave his place to a great landholder, a man, *a particule*, a future baron of the empire. Grandet relinquished his municipal honors without regret; they had subserved his purposes; for, pretending while he held them, that the interests of the town required it, he had improved the roads that led to his demesnes; and at the same time had caused his house and lands to be so registered as to come under the minimum rate of taxes.

His dismissal from office took place in the year 1806, when he was fifty-seven, and his wife about thirty-six years of age. Their daughter, Eugenie Grandet, was then ten years old.

But Providence seemed to console M. Grandet for political disgrace; for, during this same year he inherited, successively, the fortunes of Madame la Bertelliere, his wife's mother; M. la Bertelliere, his wife's grandfather; and Madame Gentillet, his wife's maternal grandmother—three estates of which no one knew the value. Avarice was the reigning passion of these three old people; indeed, M. la Bertelliere considered an investment in the light of a prodigality, for he reaped a larger interest in looking at his gold than in the gains of usury. The people of Saumur could, therefore, only guess at the amount of his wealth.

M. Grandet now cultivated one hundred and forty acres of vineyard, which in a good season yielded from a thousand to twelve hundred casks of wine. He owned besides thirteen granges; an old abbey, the windows of which he walled up for economy; one hundred and thirty acres of meadow, containing three thousand poplars, planted in 1793; and, finally, the house in which he resided.

This was his real estate. The value of his personal property could not be even guessed at, save by two individuals. One was a M. Cruchot, his attorney; and the other, a Mr. des Grassins, the richest banker in Saumur, with whom he secretly deposited certain sums of money when it suited his convenience. Now though old Cruchot and M. des Grassins were discreet and honorable men, by whom the secret would never be intentionally divulged, they still treated M. Grandet with such profound respect that the in-

quisitive neighbors made a shrewd estimate of his treasures, graduating their opinion of the amount by the extent of consideration which he received in public from his lawyer and his banker.

Besides all this, every person in Saumur was persuaded that M. Grandet had in his house a strong box of louis d'or, and that he nightly enjoyed the ineffable satisfaction of gloating over immense piles of gold. All the misers were certain of this, when they looked at the good man's eyes, which seemed to have caught the hue of the yellow ore he so steadily contemplated. The countenance of a man who is accustomed to draw usury from his fellows, like the countenance of the voluptuary, the libertine, or the gambler, acquires certain indefinable expressions — furtive, avaricious, mysterious movements—that do not escape the observation of brother misers. This is a secret language that may be termed the freemasonry of the passions.

As a financier, M. Grandet partook of the nature of both the tiger and the boa. He knew how to crouch and watch patiently for his prey; and then to spring open the maw of his purse, and engulf a mass of crowns; this done, he would lay himself quietly down, like the serpent when gorged, impassible, cold and methodical.

No one bowed to him as he passed without a mixed emotion; a feeling of respect due to a man who owes no one anything; and a feeling of fear; for, in some way or other, all had felt his gripe. One had obtained from him, through Cruchot, the funds to purchase a piece of ground, but at eight per cent. interest; another had sold notes to him through Des Grassins, but at a ruinous rate of discount. His famous vintage of 1811 (a year when wine was so abundant that it was sold for an insignificant price), which he stowed away in his cellars, he sold in a subsequent year of scarcity for more than two hundred thousand livres.

In 1816, the most intelligent of his neighbors estimated Grandet's real estate at three and a half millions; and as his revenue therefrom must have been, since 1793, more than a hundred thousand francs a year, it was presumed that his ready money equaled in amount the value of his lands; so that the knowing ones rated Father Grandet at nearly six millions.

II.

M. Grandet never purchased bread or meat. Every Saturday his farmers brought him, *for rent,* a sufficiency of poultry, eggs, butter and grain; then he owned a mill, and the miller, as a consideration for his lease, was bound to come for a certain quantity of grain, and return both the bran and the flour. Big Nanon, his only servant, baked on Saturday a supply of bread for the ensuing week. His tenants furnished him with vegetables, and his orchards supplied fruit in such abundance that the greater part of it was sent off to market. His fuel was cut in part from his hedges, and consisted, also, in part, of old stumps of trees; and after his tenants had prepared it for him, and piled it in his woodhouse, he uniformly returned them his thanks for their services. Indeed, his only expenditures of money, so far as could be ascertained, were purchases of the consecrated bread, his wife's and daughter's wardrobe, the rent of chairs for them in the church, lights, taxes, the wages of Nanon, the re-tinning of his saucepans, the repairing of his buildings, and the improvement of his lands.

His manners were extremely simple, and he expressed his ideas in short sentences, uttered in a low tone. Since the period of the Revolution, when he first began to be an object of attention, he acquired a habit of stammering terribly whenever he was called to sustain an argument or a long conversation. But this stammering, as well as the incoherence of his language, and the apparent deficiency in his reasoning powers, was merely assumed, for purposes that will be developed in the course of this history. Four sentences served him on all occasions, and one or more of them was made

applicable to every emergency; these were:

"I do not know."

"I cannot."

"I will not."

"We will see about it."

He never said *yes*, or *no*, and never put pen to paper. When spoken to, he listened coldly, resting his chin in his right hand, and leaning his right elbow on the back of his left hand. He formed his opinions deliberately, and never changed them. He negotiated long and carefully before he concluded any bargain, however slight; and after a prosy, yet shrewd, conversation, in which he managed to learn his antagonist's views without betraying his own, he would defer the matter by saying: "I cannot conclude this without consulting my wife." He never made or received visits; he gave no dinners; avoided notoriety in public, and seemed to economize his very footsteps.

Still, despite his mild voice and circumspect behavior, the language and habits of the cooper would sometimes betray his origin, especially at home, where he practiced less restraint than elsewhere.

His height was five feet, four inches; his frame square; his knees were double-jointed, and his shoulders broad. His face was round, swarthy, and marked with the small-pox. His chin was flat, his lips were curveless, and his teeth white. His forehead, filled with transversal wrinkles, was not wanting in characteristic bumps; his hair, yellow and gray intermingled, was *silver and gold*, as some one said who was ignorant of the enormity of his offense in perpetrating a witticism on Father Grandet. His nose, large at its nether extremity, supported a veined wen, which, according to the common people—and they were not far wrong—was full of malice. In short, his face announced a dangerous cunning, a probity without soul, and the selfishness of a man accustomed to divide his affections between his wealth and the only living being for whom he cared—his daughter and sole heir. His attitude, deportment, and gait, all attested that self-confidence which the fact of unvarying success in one's enterprises necessarily imparts. Thus, Monsieur Grandet's character, notwithstanding his pliant manners, was a character of bronze.

As he always dressed in one uniform fashion, any one who saw him now, beheld him as he was in 1791. He wore stout shoes, with leather strings, worsted stockings, breeches of coarse, chestnut-colored cloth, silver knee-buckles, vest of velvet, striped with yellow and red, a coat the color of his breeches, a white neck-cloth, and a quaker hat. His gloves, as stout as a gendarme's, lasted him twenty months, and to keep them clean, he laid them always on the same spot of the brim of his hat. Saumur knew nothing further of old M. Grandet.

There were but six of the inhabitants who had the liberty of entering his house.

The most important of these was the nephew of M. Cruchot. This young man, since his appointment to the presidency of the tribunal *de premiere instance*, had annexed the name Bonfons to Cruchot, and strove to make the former prevail over the latter. He signed his name C. de Bonfons; and woe to the litigant who was so imprudent as to style him President Cruchot; he felt the evils of his carelessness before he left the court.

The new magistrate was thirty-three years of age, was master of the domain of Bonfons (Bonæ Fontis), was worth, in possession, seven thousand francs per annum, and, in expectation, the fortunes of his uncles, the notary and the abbe—the latter being a dignitary of the Chapter of the Saint Martin de Tours. These three Cruchots rejoiced in a large number of cousins, and as they were related to some twenty families in Saumur, they formed a large party, as did the Pazzis of yore, in Florence—and the Cruchots, like the Pazzis, had their enemies.

Madame des Grassins, mother of a son some twenty-three years old, was assiduous in her attentions to Madame Grandet, for she hoped to marry her dear Adolphe to Eugenie; and the banker vigorously seconded his wife's maneuvers by a series of secret services rendered to the old mi-

ser. The three Des Grassins, too, like the three Cruchots, had their adherents, their cousins and their allies.

On the side of the Cruchots, the abbe, who was the Talleyrand of the family, seconded also by his brother, the notary, stoutly disputed the ground with the bankeress, and did his best to gain the rich heritage for his nephew.

Who will Mademoiselle Grandet espouse? the president, or Adolphe des Grassins?

This question was in every one's mouth —but some insinuated in reply, that the old cooper, bitten by ambition, was seeking a son-in-law among the peers of France, to whom an income of two hundred thousand francs would render all the past, present, and future casks of all the Grandets endurable.

But others rejoined that the Des Grassins were nobly born and very rich; that Adolphe was an excellent young man, and that, unless a nephew of the pope was in the market, the young Des Grassins ought to satisfy the people sprung from nothing, and especially one whom all Saumur had seen working at his bench, and who, moreover, had won the *bonnet rouge*.

Meantime, the most observing of the inhabitants remarked that M. Cruchot de Bonfons had the freedom of the house at all hours, while his rival was received only on Sundays. On the other hand, it was contended that Madame des Grassins was too shrewd a negotiator to be foiled, be appearances what they might. And again, it was replied that the Abbé Cruchot was the most insinuating man in the world, and as the contest was woman against monk, it was at least an equal game.

"They are neck and neck," said a wit of Saumur.

However, some of the older people took a still different view of the matter, and declared that old Grandet would never let his fortune go out of his family.

"Eugenie," said they, "will marry the son of M. Grandet, the rich wine-merchant of Paris."

"Never believe that," answered the adherents of the Cruchots and Des Grassins; "the brothers have not met twice in thirty years. Besides, M. Grandet, of Paris, has ambitious views for his son. He is mayor of his arrondissement; deputy; colonel in the National Guard; and judge of the Tribunal de Commerce. He disowns the Grandets of Saumur, and intends to ally his son with some family that has been made ducal by the grace of Napoleon."

In the beginning of the year 1818, the Cruchots gained a signal advantage over the Des Grassins. The estate of Froidfond, remarkable for its park, its chateau, its farms, river, ponds, forests, and worth five millions, was put up for sale by the young Marquis of Froidfond, who was in need of money. Lawyer Cruchot, President Cruchot, and Abbé Cruchot succeeded in preventing the estate from being sold in parcels; and the notary subsequently concluded a golden bargain with the young marquis by persuading him that it would be greatly to his advantage to sell the whole to M. Grandet, who was a responsible man, and able to seal his contract with ready money. So, the beautiful estate of Froidfond was conveyed to the maw of M. Grandet, who, to the surprise of all Saumur—for the transaction proved they had underestimated the miser's wealth—paid for it, at a discount, in gold. This affair resounded from Nates to Orleans.

M. Grandet went to visit his chateau by means of a country-wagon bound thitherward. After casting a glance over his new possessions, he returned to Saumur well satisfied with his bargain, and conceived the magnificent plan of enlarging the marquisate of Froidfond by uniting to it his other estates. And, to replenish his now almost exhausted treasury, he determined to clear his woodlands, and fell the poplars in his meadows.

Having dwelt thus long on the town and people of Saumur, and on some of the characteristics of its richest inhabitants, we must now take a closer view of the old miser's residence—a bleak, cold, and silent house, situated above the town, and sheltered by its ruined ramparts.

The two pillars, and the arch forming the doorway, had, like the house, been constructed of *tufau*, a white stone peculiar to the banks of the Loire, and of so soft a nature that its average duration is scarcely two centuries. The scragged and numberless holes fantastically worn into it by the inclemency of the climate, gave to the molding and jambs of this doorway the appearance of the vermiculated stone of France, while its form was not unlike the portal of a jail. Above the arch was a long bass-relief of hard stone, representing the four seasons, but the figures were much worn and blackened. The bass-relief was surmounted by a jutting plinth, over which sprung a variety of those chance-sown plants—the yellow pellitory, bindweed, convolvolus, plantain, and a young cherry-tree already quite large.

The door of massive oak, dingy, shrunk, split in every direction, and apparently very frail, was nevertheless well-sustained by the iron nails and knobs that ornamented it in symmetrical figures. A square small grating of closely interwoven iron-bars occupied the center of the *porte batarde*, furnishing an occasion for a hammer which was attached to it by a ring and struck on the grinning face of an enormous nail-head. This hammer was of the kind styled *jacquemart* by our ancestors, and resembled, in form, an exclamation point. An antiquary, by closely examining it, would recognize in it some traces of a ludicrous figure, which it represented in other days, but which long use had wellnigh obliterated.

Through this little grating, which served during the civil wars for reconnoitering, the curious might perceive a few decayed steps under a dark and greenish arch that ascended to a garden inclosed by thick walls, that in turn were surrounded and overshadowed by shrubs and vines. These walls were the ramparts of the old tower, and beyond them were gardens belonging to the adjacent houses.

The largest apartment on the ground-floor of the mansion was a *salle*, the entrance to which was under the arch of the *porte-cochere;* few persons are aware of the importance that the inhabitants of Anjou, Touraine, and Berry attach to this kind of apartment. It is at once the antechamber, the parlor, the cabinet, the boudoir and the eating-room; it is the theater of domestic life. Here, twice a year, came the barber to cut Mr. Grandet's hair; here entered the farmers, the curate, the sub-prefect, and the miller's boy. The floor of this room was wooden; its two windows opened upon the street; gray panels, with antique moldings, wainscoted it from top to bottom; the ceiling was of naked beams, also painted gray, and the spaces between them, which had once been white, were now yellow with age.

An old *cartel* of brass, incrusted with arabesques of shell, adorned the rudely sculptured mantel-piece of white stone. Above, a greenish-colored mirror with its edge cut obliquely, to show the thickness of the glass, reflected the rays of light on its Gothic frame of carved steel. Two girandoles of burnished brass stood at the ends of the mantel and served a double purpose; for on unscrewing the branches and fitting the socket of the main branch into the pedestal, the latter —of bluish marble ornamented with brass —became a candlestick of ordinary use.

The chairs were of an antique form and garnished with tapestry designed from the Fables of La Fontaine; but the figures were so distorted by darning, and the colors so faded by age, that unless first informed of the subjects you would never recognize them. In each corner of this room stood an *encoignure*—a species of buffet or sideboard, surmounted by a range of dingy shelves. An old table of marquetry, its top forming, also, a chess-board, was placed in the pier between the windows, where hung an oval barometer in an ebony case, ticked off with ribbons of gilded wood, which, however, the flies had so wantonly abused that the fact of its having been once gilded was now problematical.

On the wall opposite the fire-place, were two portraits in crayon, said to be likenesses of old Monsieur de la Bertelliere

in the dress of a lieutenant of the French Guards, and of Madame Gentillet arrayed as a shepherdess.

The windows were hung with curtains of red taffeta drawn by silk cords, ornamented with tassels in the form of a church. This luxurious decoration, so little in harmony with Monsieur Grandet's habits, together with the mirror, the *cartel*, the tapestried chairs, and the rosewood buffets, had been included in the purchase of the house.

By the window nearest the door were straw-bottomed chairs mounted on blocks, from which Madame Grandet might look out at the passers-by; a work-chair of discolored cherry-wood filled the recess, and Eugenie's small armchair stood close by.

Here, for fifteen years, each day had been quietly passed by the mother and daughter in constant sewing from April to November. On the first day of the latter month, they changed their stations to the fire-place, for on that day Monsieur Grandet permitted a fire to be lighted, which he ordered to be discontinued on and after the thirty-first of March — without any regard to the temperature of a late spring or an early autumn. A foot-stove, supplied from the embers of the kitchen-fire, that Nanon with some skill managed to save for them, enabled Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet to support the chilly mornings and evenings of April and October.

III.

THE mother and daughter did all the sewing for the household, and so entirely did this labor occupy their time, that Eugenie was compelled, when she would embroider a collar for her mother, to abridge her own hours of sleep and cheat her father out of a candle. All the lights, as well as the provisions ordinarily used in the house, were distributed by the miser in daily portions with his own hands.

Big Nanon was perhaps the only human being capable of submitting voluntarily to her master's despotism, and the whole town envied the Grandet family her possession. Big Nanon, so called on account of her height, which was six feet and over, had lived with old Grandet thirty-five years; and although her wages were but sixty livres a year, she was accounted one of the richest servants in Saumur, for the sixty livres, annually accumulating through such a period of time, had enabled her recently to place four thousand livres at interest in the hands of Monsieur Cruchot. The result of her economy seemed enormous, and every servant in the town, seeing that the old sexagenarian had a provision for her old age, envied her, without considering the hard service by which it was acquired.

This woman, when a girl of twenty-two, had been unable to get employment elsewhere, owing to the repulsiveness of her appearance—a treatment very unjust on the part of the public, for her head would have been admired on the shoulders of a grenadier of the guards. Compelled to quit a farmhouse that was destroyed by fire, she came to Saumur; and, animated by a good heart that refuses no service, she sought eagerly for a home. Father Grandet, at that time, was thinking about entering into the marriage state, and had already begun to arrange his establishment, when he spied out this huge girl, repelled from door to door. Being a good judge of corporal strength from the character of his own vocation, he at once foresaw all the labor that could be obtained from a female formed in the mold of Hercules, standing on her feet as an oak of sixty summers stands in the soil, strong in her arms, square in her back, with hands like a cartman's, and with a probity as sturdy as her virtue was frigid. Not the warts that flourished on her face, nor her brick-bat complexion, nor her ragged wardrobe dismayed the cooper. He took the girl into his service, shod, dressed, fed, paid her, and spoke to her kindly.

Big Nanon wept secret tears of joy at this reception, and she became sincerely attached to the cooper, who, on his part,

turned her capabilities to the best account. Nanon did everything. She cooked, baked, and scrubbed; carried the clothes to the banks of the Loire, washed them there and brought them back on her shoulders; rose with the dawn and went to bed late; prepared the meals for all the men during harvest; watched the grape gatherers; defended like a faithful dog the property of her master; and, full of blind confidence in him, obeyed his most absurd whims without a murmur.

In the famous year, 1811, M. Grandet resolved to give Nanon, after twenty years' service, his old watch; and this was the only present she had ever received; for although he ceded to her his old shoes, and she could wear them, it was impossible to regard this tri-monthly perquisite as a gift, they were so faithfully worn before they came into her possession. Necessity rendered the poor creature avaricious, and she at length brought this practice of avarice to such perfection that old Grandet loved her from the bottom of his heart.

Nanon, in short, became part and parcel of the family. She laughed when her master laughed; sorrowed, worked, froze, thawed, when he did. "Come, Nanon, feast yourself!" he would say to her in those years of plenty when his trees bent beneath the weight of their fruit, and his farmers were compelled to feed their hogs with it. For a country girl, accustomed to ill-treatment, for a poor creature who had subsisted on meager charity, the equivocal laugh of Father Grandet was a genuine sunbeam. Besides, her simple heart and scanty brain had room but for one idea; an idea that for thirty-five years had superseded all others; and that was a grateful recollection of the day when she stood barefooted and in rags at the gate of M. Grandet, and he said to her kindly: "Well, beauty, what do you want?"

"I wonder what the Grandets do to Nanon, that she should be so attached to them?" was an inquiry often made in Saumur.

Nanon's kitchen, with its grated windows opening toward the yard, was always clean, neat, and cold; a genuine miser's kitchen, where nothing goes to waste. When she had washed her dishes, put away the remains of the dinner, and extinguished the fire, she took a place in the parlor and spun her flax by the side of her mistress. One candle sufficed them for the evening. Nanon slept at the end of the passageway that united parlor and kitchen, in a closet lighted by an inner window; her robust health allowing her to inhabit with impunity this kind of den, whence she could hear the slightest noise from without, and where she was expected to sleep, like a watch-dog, with one ear open.

The description of the other parts of this house will be found interwoven with the details of the story.

Early in the evening of the seventeenth of November, 1819, Nanon lighted a fire in the parlor for the first time that year, for the autumn had been extremely fine. This was a feast-day, well known to the Cruchots and Des Grassins; and the six antagonists came prepared at all points to vie with each other in proofs of regard and friendship for the Grandets.

In the morning of that day, all Saumur had seen Madame Grandet and Eugenie, accompanied by Nanon, repair to the parish church to hear mass, and all remembered that it was Eugenie's birthday.

Lawyer Cruchot, Abbe Cruchot, and M. C. de Bonfons, calculating the hour when dinner would be over, strove to arrive immediately after it, in order to anticipate the Des Grassins in congratulating Eugenie; and they all brought with them enormous bouquets, culled from their small courtyards. The stems of the president's bouquet were neatly enveloped in a white satin ribbon, ornamented with gold fringe.

Old Grandet, according to his custom on his daughter's birthday and feast-day, had entered her apartment before she arose, and solemnly offered his paternal gift, which, for thirteen years past had been a double Napoleon. Madame Gran-

det, on the same occasion, always gave her daughter a new dress.

These Napoleons and two other gold pieces which Eugenie received on her father's birthday and on the first day of each year, formed a little revenue of about a hundred crowns that the old man delighted to see her accumulate. Was it not, he would say to himself, merely putting his money from one box into another? and, in the meantime, educating the avarice of his heiress, from whom he frequently asked an account of her treasure.

"It will be your marriage *dozen*," he would say to her.

This "dozen" (*douzain*) belongs to an ancient usage still in force in some of the provinces of France. In Berry and in Anjou, especially when a girl marries, her own family or that of her husband presents her with a purse containing, according to their ability, twelve pieces, or twelve dozen pieces, or twelve hundred pieces of silver or gold. The poorest maiden would not marry without her "dozen," were it only twelve coppers. It is told in Issoudun of a "dozen" offered to a rich heiress that contained a hundred and forty-four Portuguese golden coins. Pope Clement, uncle of Catherine de Medicis, made her a present, on her marriage with Henry II., of a dozen antique gold medals of immense value.

While the family were at dinner, old Grandet, delighted at Eugenie's cheerful beauty, exclaimed: "Light the fire, Nanon, for it is Eugenie's birthday, and it will be a good omen."

"Mademoiselle Eugenie will surely be married before the year is out," said Nanon, as she removed from the table the remains of a goose—the pheasant of coopers.

"I see no match for her in Saumur," said Madame Grandet, hazarding a timid glance at her husband, which announced her perfect conjugal servitude.

Monsieur Grandet pondered a moment, and then said gayly:

"The child is twenty-three years old to-day; we must begin to think about the matter."

Eugenie and her mother here interchanged a look of intelligence.

Madame Grandet was a dry, thin woman, yellow as a quince, awkward and slow; one of those women who seem to be created expressly for submitting to domestic tyranny. She had large limbs, a large nose, a large forehead, and large eyes. Her teeth were few and black, her mouth was wrinkled, and her chin of the form styled peaked. She was an excellent woman and a *De la Bertilliere* born. The Abbé Cruchot had taken occasion to tell her that she was not so *very* ill-looking, and she believed him. An angelic sweetness of temper, the resignation of an insect tormented by children, a rare piety, an unalterable tranquillity of soul, and a good heart, caused her to be universally pitied and respected in Saumur.

Her husband never gave her more than six francs at a time for pin-money; and —although the assertion may appear ridiculous—this woman, who had by her dowry and inheritance brought her husband more than three hundred thousand francs, always felt so profoundly humiliated at a dependence and an isolation against which the gentleness of her disposition forbade her to revolt, that she had never asked Monsieur Grandet for a sou, nor made a remark on the papers which Monsieur Cruchot, from time to time, placed before her for signature. This unwise and secret loftiness of spirit —this nobleness of soul, constantly misunderstood and as constantly wounded by her husband—governed the conduct of the wife.

She uniformly wore a dress of green levantine, and one was made to last for nearly a year; and to this was added a neckerchief of white muslin, a straw bonnet and an apron of black taffeta; and as she seldom walked out, her shoes wore a long time. In a word, her whole expenses for dress were but a trifle.

Sometimes, old Grandet, reproaching himself when he called to mind the length of time that had elapsed since he last gave his wife six francs, would stipulate, while selling his produce for the year, for a certain sum of pin-money for her, in

addition to the price demanded. The four or five louis offered on such occasions by the Hollander or the Belgian, formed the greater part of Madame Grandet's income. And yet, after she had received this sum, her husband would often say, as if their purses were in common:

"Can you lend me some change?"

And the poor woman, happy to do something for the man whom her confessor represented as her lord and master, would give him, during the winter, some crowns out of her pittance.

When Grandet drew from his pocket the piece of a hundred sous allowed monthly to his daughter for her thread, needles and toilet, he would always say—after first buttoning his coat:

"Well, mother, do you want anything?"

"We will see about it," was the uniform reply of Madame Grandet, animated by a feeling of maternal dignity. But this display of dignity was thrown away on the miser; he considered himself very generous toward his wife.

At the conclusion of the dinner, when, for the first time, the question of Eugenie's marriage had been broached, Nanon, after lighting the fire, went to fetch a bottle of cordial from Monsieur Grandet's room, and chanced to stumble as she came down the stairs.

"You great horse!" cried her master, "are you going to let yourself tumble, as other people do?"

"One of the stairs is broken, sir," said Nanon, submissively.

"She is right," said Madame Grandet, "and it should have been mended long ago. Eugenie was near spraining her ankle on that step yesterday."

"Here," said Grandet to Nanon, for he observed that she looked pale and faint, "since it is Eugenie's birthday, and you almost had a fall, take a glass of cordial."

"I have earned it, sir, that's a fact," replied Nanon, "for most people in my place would have let the bottle fall; but I would sooner have broken my elbow."

"Poor Nanon," said Grandet, pouring out the cordial.

"Did you hurt yourself, Nanon?" said Eugenie, compassionately.

"Not much," answered Nanon.

"Well," added Grandet, "since it is Eugenie's birthday, I will mend the stair for you. You women never know how to place your feet in the corner of the step, where it is as sound as ever."

And so saying, he took the candle to look for boards, nails and tools, leaving the family with no other light than the fire produced.

"Do you want any help, sir," cried Nanon, when she heard him hammer on the stairs.

"Not I! I know my business," replied the old cooper.

While he was thus occupied, mending his old worm-eaten staircase, and whistling with all his might in memory of his younger days, the Cruchots knocked at the door.

"Is it you, Monsieur Cruchot?" inquired Nanon, looking through the grating.

"Yes," answered the president.

Nanon opened the door, and the blaze of the cheerful fire, reflected through the arch, enabled the visitors to find their way into the parlor.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," shouted old Grandet, when he recognized their voices, "I'll be with you in a trice. I have no pride about me; I'm patching up one of the stairs."

"Don't interrupt yourself on our account, Monsieur Grandet," said the president, graciously; and, as the ladies rose to receive their guests, he advanced to Eugenie, saying: "Permit me, Mademoiselle Grandet, on this, your birthday, to wish you a succession of happy years, and a continuation of the health you at present enjoy." Whereupon he presented to her his large bouquet of rare flowers. Then taking hold of the points of her elbows, he kissed her on both sides of her neck with a zeal that abashed the young lady, though he thought he was very industriously making love.

Old Grandet soon entered to welcome his guests, and concluded by saying:

"Since it is Eugenie's birthday, we must

have an illumination?" So saying, he adjusted a light in the other girandole, and seated himself by the side of his wife, looking alternately at his friends, his daughter, and the two candles.

The Abbé Cruchot, a little fat man, with a smooth red wig and a face like a lively old woman's, remarked, as he poked out his feet, incased in coarse shoes with silver buckles:

"The Des Grassins have not come yet!"

"Not yet," answered old Grandet.

"Will they come?" inquired the notary, puckering up a face as full of pock-marks as a skimmer is of holes.

"I believe so," said Madame Grandet.

"Are your vintages over?" asked the president of Monsieur Grandet.

"Yes, all of them," replied the old miser, rising from his chair and marching up and down the room with a motion as full of pride as his words, "all of them." Then, looking through the open doors into the kitchen, he saw Nanon seated by the fire with a light, and preparing to spin. He at once cried out: "Nanon, put out your fire and light, and come in here; the room is large enough for all of us."

"But you have company, sir," said Nanon.

"Ain't you as good as they?" rejoined the old cooper; "they are children of Adam, and so are you. Come in.—Have you sold your wine?" he added, turning to the president.

"No, indeed!" said Cruchot the younger. "If wine is good now, it will be better two years hence. All the sellers, you know, have agreed to keep up the price, and this year the Belgians may go home without it."

"Ay, but we must all be firm to our agreement!" said old Grandet, in a tone that alarmed the president's suspicions.

"Can he be selling, after all?" said the young man to himself.

At this moment a stroke of the hammer announced the arrival of the Des Grassins.

Madame des Grassins was one of those lively little women, plump, fair, and rosy, who, by reason of the monastic regimen of the provinces, and of a strictly virtuous life, look young at forty. She dressed passably well, sent to Paris for the modes, led the fashion in Saumur, and gave *soirees*. Her husband, formerly a quartermaster in the Imperial Guards, but since retired, was badly wounded at Austerlitz, and outwardly maintained, notwithstanding the respect he paid to Monsieur Grandet, the frankness of a soldier.

"Good-evening, Grandet," said he, holding out his hand to the old cooper, and affecting a kind of superiority that always overpowered the Cruchots. "Mademoiselle Eugenie," he said, after bowing to Madame Grandet, "you are always so handsome and good, that I really do not know what to wish for you that you have not already." He then presented to her a small box, brought by his servant, containing a heather of the Cape, a plant just imported, and extremely rare in Europe.

Madame des Grassins embraced Eugenie affectionately, saying: "Adolphe is commissioned to present my souvenir to you."

Upon this, a tall, light-complexioned young man, of rather good manners, and apparently bashful—though he had just returned from Paris, where he had professed to study law, and had spent some ten thousand francs more than his allowance—advanced toward Eugenie, touching her cheek with his lips, and offering to her a work-box, that contained the requisite articles, in silver gilt.

When Eugenie opened it, she experienced one of those agreeable surprises that cause young girls to blush, and start, and tremble for joy. She turned toward her father, as if to ask his permission to accept it, and he replied to her look with a "take it, my daughter," in a tone of which none of the spectators could devise the meaning.

The Cruchots were perfectly stupefied at the joyful and encouraging looks bestowed on Adolphe by the heiress, to whom such magnificent liberality seemed an incredible thing. Monsieur des Grassins offered a pinch of snuff to Monsieur

EUGÉNIE GRANDET.

"How complacently she sat at the window."

Grandet, took one himself, brushed off the grains that fell on his ribbon of the Legion of Honor, and looked at the Cruchots with an air that said, "Match that box, my masters!"

Madame des Grassins then cast her eyes on the blue jars in which the Cruchots' bouquets had been placed, as if looking for their gifts, with the well-counterfeited honesty of a sneering woman.

At this delicate juncture, the abbé rose from the circle seated around the fire, and joined old Grandet, who was still pacing to and fro across the room, and stopping him as he reached the remotest part of it, he whispered:

"These people throw their money out of the window."

"What of that," rejoined Grandet, "if it falls back into the cellar?"

"Oh," said the abbé, "if you wish to give your daughter gold scissors, you are well able to do so."

"I shall give her something better than scissors," returned Grandet, quietly.

"My nephew is a dolt!" thought the abbé, as he looked at the president, whose disordered hair made him appear even worse than usual; "why could not he have trumped up some such foolery that would have cost something?"

"We will make up your table," said Madame des Grassins to Madame Grandet.

"There are enough of us," interposed one of the Cruchots, "for two tables—"

"Since it is Eugenie's birthday," said old Grandet, "let us all play loto together; these children can join in," and he pointed to Eugenie and Adolphe. "Come, Nanon, fix the tables."

"We will help you, *Mademoiselle* Nanon," said Madame des Grassins, gayly, delighted at having so delighted Eugenie.

"I have never been so happy in my life," said the heiress to her. "I have never seen anything so handsome before."

"Adolphe chose it himself in Paris," whispered Madame des Grassins in reply.

"Go on! go on! you d—— intriguer!" said the president to himself, in a rage; "but if ever you or your husband has a lawsuit in my court, you'll lose it, I promise you that!"

The notary, from his corner by the fire, looked at the abbé, and said to himself: "The Des Grassins may do what they please; my fortune, with my brother's and nephew's, amounts to eleven hundred thousand francs. Perhaps the Des Grassins have half that sum; and there is, besides, a daughter in that family to be provided for. Let them give as many things as they please now—the heiress and the gifts will all be ours one of these days."

At half-past eight the tables were arranged, and Madame des Grassins had succeeded in placing her son by the side of Eugenie. The actors in this scene—so full of interest, though so trivial in appearance—were furnished with checked and figured cards, and blue glass counters, and seemed to be listening to the witticisms of the notary, who did not draw a number without some remark; but, in reality, every one was thinking more of the old miser's millions than of the game; while he, in turn, superciliously surveying the group, said to himself:

"They are all after my money; and they come here to tire themselves in a strife for my daughter; but neither the one nor the other of these sprigs shall have her."

This appearance of social gayety in the old gray room, ill-lighted by two candles; these shouts of laughter which were genuine only on the lips of Eugenie and her mother; this mean servility attached to such great interests; this young girl who—like those birds that are eagerly sought and become the victims of the high prices set upon them—found herself surrounded by such testimonials of regard, and was duped by them; all this contributed to render the passing scene comically sad. The spirit of this scene is indeed common to all times and all places; but here it was presented in its least sophisticated form. The part of old Grandet, who fully estimated the attachment of the rival families, and so played them off against each other as to draw im-

mense pecuniary advantage from their competition for his favor, was the grand center of the drama, around which its interests were congregated, and through which its mysteries were explained. Was not this old man the incarnation of the only deity to whom modern mortals bow the knee—Wealth? omnipotent Wealth? and equally omnipotent whether held by a man rich in talents and virtues, or by a wretch unworthy to crawl on the face of the earth.

The gentle sensibilities of life occupied but a secondary place in this group; they animated only three hearts there, those of Nanon, Eugenie, and her mother. And how ignorant were these three in their simplicity! Neither Eugenie nor her mother knew or conceived the extent of Grandet's fortune; they regarded the things of this life by the light of their own circumscribed notions; they neither prized money nor despised it; they were accustomed to do without it. Their sensibilities, naturally vivacious, but crushed and withered they knew not how nor when, were curiously distinct from those of the persons assembled around them, whose existence was purely material. Strange condition of man! Every one of his enjoyments proceeds from his ignorance!

IV.

Just as Madame Grandet had won a pool of sixteen sous—the highest that ever had been risked in that room—and was pocketing the same, much to Nanon's content, a knock at the door resounded through the house and caused the ladies to start from their chairs.

"There's no one of Saumur who knocks in that fashion!" exclaimed the notary.

"Do they want to break the door down?" said Nanon.

"Who the devil is it?" cried Monsieur Grandet.

Nanon took one of the candles, and, followed by her master, went to open the door.

"Grandet! Grandet!" exclaimed his wife, who, actuated by a vague feeling of terror, was also hurrying in the same direction.

The guests looked at one another for a moment.

"Let us go, too," said Monsieur des Grassins; "that was a very suspicious knock."

And so saying and following his host he caught a glimpse of a young man, accompanied by a porter, who carried two enormous trunks and dragged behind him sundry carpet-bags. But old Grandet turned gruffly around and said to his wife, for the benefit of herself and friends:

"Go back to your loto, and leave me to talk with this young man."

And thereupon he slammed the door of the parlor in her face. The agitated players returned to their seats, but did not continue their game.

"Is it any one of Saumur?" inquired Madame des Grassins of her husband.

"No, it is a traveler," he answered.

"He must be from Paris," said the notary; "and indeed," he continued, drawing from his fob a watch two inches thick that looked like a Dutch piggin, "it is just nine o'clock; the diligence is never behind time."

"Is he a young man?" asked the abbé.

"Yes," said Des Grassins, "and he brings luggage with him that weighs at least six hundred pounds."

"It must be one of your relations," said the president to Madame Grandet.

"Let us go on with the game," she replied, softly. "I saw that Monsieur Grandet was vexed when I followed him, and perhaps when he returns he would be still further displeased to find us commenting on his affairs."

"It is doubtless your Cousin Grandet, Mademoiselle Eugenie," said Adolphe; "a very handsome young man, whom I met in Paris at a ball of Marshal Oud—"

Adolphe stopped suddenly, for his mother trod on his toe, and, speaking loud, told him to put up his stake of two sous: "Can't you hold your tongue, you booby?" whispered she in his ear.

At this moment Monsieur Grandet re-

turned, while the steps of Nanon and the porter, carrying up the luggage, were heard on the stairs. The old man was followed by the traveler, who, for the last few moments, had excited so much curiosity.

"Sit down by the fire," said Grandet to him.

The stranger prepared to do so; but before seating himself he bowed gracefully to the company, to which salutation the gentlemen replied by a formal bow, and the ladies by a ceremonious courtesy.

"You must be cold, sir," said Madame Grandet; "you come from—"

"That's just the way with women!" interrupted the old cooper, looking up from a letter he was reading; "why don't you let the gentleman rest himself?"

"But, papa," said Eugenie, "perhaps he wants some supper."

"He has a tongue, and can speak for himself," replied her fatherly, severely.

The new-comer was the only one in whom the details of this scene excited surprise; for he alone was unacquainted with the miserly and despotic brutality of old Grandet. Nevertheless, when he heard the last two suggestions and their answers, he arose from his chair, turned his back to the fire, raised one of his feet so as to warm the sole of his boot, and said to Eugenie:

"Thank you, cousin, I dined at Tours, and have need of nothing. I am not even fatigued."

"Do you come from the capital?" asked Madame des Grassins.

Charles—for that was the name of the son of Monsieur Grandet, of Paris—being thus addressed, raised his eye-glass, surveyed the table and the people around it, gazed impertinently at Madame des Grassins, and replied: "Yes, madame." He then continued: "I see you are playing loto, aunt; pray continue your game."

"I was sure it was this Paris cousin," thought Madame des Grassins, looking toward him out of a corner of her eye.

"Forty-seven!" cried the abbé; "why don't you mark it, Madame des Grassins? You have the number."

Monsieur des Grassins placed the counter on the card before his wife, who, full of sad presentiment, observed Eugenie and her Paris cousin alternately, without thinking of loto. From time to time, the young heiress cast furtive glances at her cousin, and the banker's wife could easily discern in those glances a *crescendo* of astonishment and curiosity.

V.

Charles Grandet, a fine-looking young man of two-and-twenty, presented a singular contrast to the provincialists by whom he was surrounded. They were offended at his aristocratic manners, and studied his behavior with the intention of ridiculing it.

At two-and-twenty, young men are so far boys that they usually give themselves up to many puerilities; and ninety-nine in a hundred of them would probably have acted precisely as Charles did; that is, like an effeminate puppy. His father had sent him to pass a few months with his brother at Saumur; and perhaps he was thinking of Eugenie when he came to this determination. Be that as it may, Charles, who for the first time was going to live in a province, resolved to appear there with all the superiority of a fashionable young man, to astonish the natives by his luxurious display, and to create a sensation by enacting the style of Parisian life.

He therefore brought with him the handsomest shooting-dress, gun, hunting-knife, and sheath, that could be found in Paris. He also brought his most fanciful waistcoats—gray, white, black, beetle-color, shot with gold, spangled, embroidered, double-breasted, straight-collar, rolling-collar, gold buttons, etc.; also, all the varieties of stocks and collars then in vogue; also, two coats from Staub's; his finest linen, together with a gold dressing-case, a present from his mother. In short, he brought all the nick-nacks of a *dandy*, not forgetting a beautiful portfolio, given him by a charming lady whom he called Annette, and who was now

traveling with her husband in Scotland. His inventory comprised, indeed, a cargo of Parisian trifles, from the switch that serves to commence a quarrel, to the pistols that sometimes terminate it. As his father had forbidden him to take his valet, he came in the *coupé* of the diligence, retained for himself alone.

Charles expected to find at least a hundred persons at his uncle's, with whom he could hunt in the forests, and through whose obsequiousness he could lead an elegant *vie de chateau*. He had no idea that his uncle lived at Saumur, where he proposed to stay long enough to inquire his way to Froidfond; and in order to make his début there in proper style, he had dressed himself in his most exquisite traveling-costume. At Tours he had his chestnut locks re-curled, changed his linen, and donned a new black cravat. A traveling coat, buttoned half-way, and fitting his form exactly, exposed a waistcoat of palm-leaf cashmere, under which was another of white. His watch was carelessly slipped into his vest pocket, and attached to a button-hole by a gold chain. His gray pantaloons were buttoned at the feet, and the seams embroidered with black silk; his cane had a carved gold head, and his gloves were of a delicate lemon color.

A Parisian, and no one else, can be thus arrayed without being ridiculous; and it may be added that Charles's fearless and haughty bearing well sustained and harmonized with his folly and foppishness.

And now, if the reader would entirely comprehend the astonishment of the Saumurites and the young Parisian; if he would distinctly see the effect that the elegance of the traveler cast over the gray shadows of this room and the figures that composed the family picture, let him try to depict to himself the appearance of the Cruchots. All three of them took snuff and all three of them, for a length of time, had ceased to be particular about keeping the ends of their noses wiped, and the frills of their linen clean. Their unstiffened cravats were twined like a cord about their necks, and their shirts being seldom bleached, grew yellow and dingy. Their whole appearance, indeed, was that of ill-grace and senility.

Whenever the Parisian put his glass to his eye to examine the queer accessories of this room—the wooden beams, the hue of the wainscoting, the glass, the furniture—the loto-players lifted up their noses and stared at him with as much curiosity as if he had been a giraffe. It is true, the appearance of a fashionable young man was not a novelty to Monsieur des Grassins and his son, yet they participated in their companions' gaze of astonishment, either because they felt the undefinable influence of a general sentiment, or because they wished to give a sanction to the prevailing astonishment by saying, with the glance of those who know: "They are all so *at Paris*."

Every one had an opportunity to observe Charles without displeasing old Grandet; for that individual was completely absorbed in the long letter he held in his hand, and to peruse it he had taken one of the candles from the players' table, without thinking or caring for the convenience of his guests.

Eugenie, to whom this type of perfection, whether of dress or person, was previously unknown, thought she beheld in her cousin a being descended from some seraphic region. She inhaled with delight the perfume of his glossy hair; she longed to touch his beautiful gloves; she envied him his small hand, his complexion, and the freshness and delicacy of his features. In fine—if the simile can convey a notion of the impressions produced by the young dandy on an ignorant country girl, who, continually occupied in darning stockings and patching her father's clothes, had spent her life under this desolate roof in a silent street where scarcely one person passed in an hour—the sight of her cousin called up in her heart emotions of delicate voluptuousness similar to those that may be felt by a young man while gazing at the fantastic figures of females in the English keepsakes, drawn by Westall, and engraved by Finden with so clever a pencil that one fears to breathe on them, lest the heavenly apparitions may be blown from the paper.

When Charles drew a handkerchief from his pocket, embroidered by the fine lady who was traveling in Scotland, Eugenie, as she saw the beautiful work, done by love during the hours lost to love, looked incredulously at her cousin, as if to inquire if he were really about to use it. Then Charles's manner, his gestures, the way he managed his eye-glass, his easy impertinence, his contempt for the work-box bestowed by Adolphe, and which had at first given such delight to the heiress—in short, all that offended the Cruchots and Des Glassins, pleased Eugenie so much that before she fell asleep she mused long and anxiously about this phœnix of cousins.

Nanon soon entered the parlor, and requested Madame Grandet to give her the sheets for the gentleman's bed; on which that lady immediately withdrew to make the necessary arrangements. The players, by common consent, took up their sous and wheeled around toward the fire.

"You've finished your game, eh?" said old Grandet, but without taking his eyes from the letter.

"Yes," answered Madame des Grassins, taking a seat by Charles.

Eugenie, actuated by one of those impulses that spring up in the heart of young ladies when a sentiment takes possession of it for the first time, quitted the parlor to assist her mother and Nanon; and she arrived very opportunely, for they were just returning to the parlor under the conviction that all was arranged, when Eugenie, who was suddenly impressed with the belief that she alone was capable of understanding the tastes and wants of her cousin, soon persuaded them that all was yet to be done. She directed Nanon to warm the sheets with some of the coals from the kitchen fire; she spread a napkin over the top of the old table, and requested Nanon to change it every day; she convinced her mother that it was necessary to light a good fire in the room, and persuaded Nanon to bring up a pile of wood, and place it in the hall without saying anything about it. She ran to one of the side-boards in the parlor and took from it a salver of old lackered work (which had formerly belonged to Monsieur de la Bertelliere), an hexagonal crystal goblet, a tarnished silver-gilt spoon, and an antique flagon, with cupids engraved on it, and triumphantly placed the whole on one side of the chimney-piece. More ideas had found their way into her head in the last quarter of an hour than ever before during her whole life.

"Mamma," said she, "my cousin will never be able to endure this tallow candle, suppose we buy a bougie?" And, light as a bird, she went for her purse, and drew out the hundred sous piece that she had received for her monthly expenses. "Go, Nanon," said she; "make haste."

"But what will your father say?"

This terrible objection was propounded by Madame Grandet, as she saw her daughter armed with an old Sevres sugar-dish, brought by Monsieur Grandet from the chateau of Froidfond. "And," she added, "where will you get sugar from? Are you crazy?"

"Oh, Nanon can buy the sugar at the same time that she buys the bougie," replied Eugenie.

"But your father," persisted her mother.

"Would it be proper that his nephew should not have a glass of sugar-water?" said Eugenie, confidently. "Besides, he will never know about it."

"Your father knows about everything in the house," said Madame Grandet, shaking her head.

Nanon hesitated—she knew her master well.

"Since it is my birthday, Nanon, you must go!" said Eugenie, archly.

Nanon burst into a shout of laughter on hearing the first facetious remark her young friend had ever uttered and she obeyed.

While Eugenie and her mother were thus embellishing his room, Charles found himself the object of Madame des Grassins' attention in the parlor.

"You are very courageous, sir," said she, "to abandon the pleasures of the metropolis during the winter for a resi-

dence at Saumur; but if we do not frighten you at first, you will find that even here we are not destitute of amusements."

Charles felt so out of his element, so far removed from the vast chateau and luxurious life with which his imagination had invested his uncle's residence, that, by dint of regarding Madame des Grassins attentively, he at length discovered in her a half-effaced resemblance to Parisian forms.

He replied therefore with courtesy; and a conversation ensued during which Madame des Grassins lowered her voice to a pitch requisite for the exchange of private conversation.

"If you would do us the honor," said the wily lady, believing she was unheard by the others, who were eagerly discussing the prices of wine; "if you would do us the honor of coming to see us, you would confer a great pleasure on my husband and myself. Our house is the only one in Saumur where you will find the *haut commerce* and the *noblesse* united, for we belong to both societies, by whom, I say it with pride, my husband is equally respected. We will endeavor to alleviate the *ennui* of your sojourn here; for gracious Heaven! what will become of you, if you remain shut up here with Monsieur Grandet? Your uncle is a miser, who thinks of nothing but planting vineyards; your aunt, a devotee, who knows not how to join together two ideas; and your cousin, a little simpleton, without education, vulgar, portionless, who passes her days in patching and mending."

Charles listened to this harangue, said to himself, "This woman is well enough," and replied to her after her own manner.

"It seems to me, wife," said the burly banker, "that you wish to monopolize the gentleman."

Taking this for a cue, the notary and president joined the conversation with more or less of malice; but the abbé, with a sly wink, took the floor, saying, as he rapped his snuff-box, and handed it around:

"Who better than Madame des Grassins can do the honors of Saumur for the gentleman?"

"How do you intend that, Abbé Cruchot?" said Monsieur des Grassins.

"I intend it, sir, in the sense most favorable to you, to your lady, to the town of Saumur, and to the gentleman," returned the cunning old man, turning to Charles. The truth is, the abbé, without appearing to attend, had divined the nature of the conversation between Charles and Madame des Grassins.

"I do not know, sir," said Adolphe, endeavoring to assume an air of ease, "whether you recollect me; but I had the pleasure of being your *vis-à-vis* at a ball given by the Marshal de Gudinot, and—"

"Perfectly, perfectly, sir," replied Charles, quietly; and then turning to Madame des Grassins, he continued, "Is he your son, madame?"

The abbé looked at her maliciously, and she replied in the affirmative.

"You must have been very young when you were in Paris," said Charles, addressing Adolphe again.

"And why not?" interposed the abbé; "we send them all to Babylon as soon as they are weaned."

Madame des Grassins looked inquisitively at the abbé, but he proceeded:

"You must come to the provinces, sir, to find women of thirty-odd years as fresh as this lady, and with sons old enough to be admitted to the bar. It seems to me, madame," he continued, turning to her, "that I still see the young people mount on benches and chairs to see you dance at a ball; to my recollection your triumphs are of yesterday."

"The old wretch!" said Madame des Grassins to herself, "he guesses my motives."

"I shall be quite a lion at Saumur," said Charles to himself, unbuttoning his traveling-coat, thrusting his hand under his vest, and looking into space, an imitation of the attitude of Lord Byron by Chantry.

Meantime, the profound attention given by Father Grandet to the letter he was reading did not escape the observation of

the notary and the president, and they endeavored to guess at its contents by studying the almost imperceptible movements of his face, strongly lighted as it was by the candle. And indeed, it was with difficulty that the miser could maintain the habitual calm of his countenance. That the reader may judge what cause he had for disturbance, the letter itself is here subjoined:

"My Brother—It is now almost twenty-three years since we have met. My marriage was the subject of our last conversation, after which we parted with light hearts. Surely I could not then foresee that you would one day become the sole hope and dependence of a family in whose prosperity you at that time rejoiced. When you receive this letter, I shall be with the dead; for I cannot survive the disgrace of bankruptcy. I have paused on the brink of the abyss, in the hope of relief, until this final moment, and now I must take the leap. The failure of both my banker and notary has swept away my last resource. My debts are not less than three millions, and my property will not pay a dividend on this of more than eight per cent. My wines, so long stored for an advance in price, have depreciated ruinously before the abundance and superior quality of your vintages. In three days, no doubt, all Paris will say of me: 'Grandet was a swindler!' while I, honest in purpose, must nevertheless lie down in a shroud of infamy. I rob my son both of the good name I once bore, and the fortune his mother bequeathed him; and he, poor idolized child! is ignorant of all this calamity. We parted affectionately, and he saw not that the flood-gates of my life overflowed in this farewell. Will he not one day curse me? Brother! brother! the malediction of our children is a fearful thing! They may appeal from ours; but theirs is irrevocable. You, as my elder brother, owe me protection; see, I pray you, that Charles casts no bitter reproaches on my memory. If I could write to you with my blood and my tears, it would not cost me half the pain I now feel; for then I should weep, bleed, die; and there would be an end of the struggle. You, brother, must henceforth be a father to Charles. He has no relations on his mother's side, and you know the cause. Why did I not submit, in time, to the force of social prejudices? Why did I yield to love? Why did I marry the illegitimate daughter of a great lord? Alas! alas! my Charles, my unfortunate son has no family nor kindred left!

"Listen to me, brother! not for my sake, but for his. For him I extend toward you my clasped and supplicating hands; I confide him to you with my expiring breath; and look at the pistols on my table without pain, feeling *sure* that you will be a father to him in my stead. Charles loves me well, for I have always been kind and indulgent to him; he will never, never curse me; you will see how tractable he is; he takes that from his mother. He will never give you any trouble. Poor child! He has been brought up in affluence, and knows nothing of the privations to which our early poverty condemned us. And now he is ruined! All of his friends will desert him; and I am the cause of all. Would that my arm was potent enough to send him at once to heaven! to his mother!

"I have sent him to you, that you may, in a suitable manner, convey to him the intelligence of my death and his prospects. Be a father, a kind father to him. Do not too suddenly impose toil and hardship upon him. I implore him, on my knees, to relinquish the claim which, as his mother's heir, he can bring against my estate; but this is idle, for he will never join in the prosecution of my creditors. Persuade him to release his claims on me in season; reveal to him the hard conditions of life that I have laid on him, and, if he maintains an affection for me still, tell him, in my name, that all is not lost for him. That industry, which saved us both, may yet restore the fortune I have wrested from him; and if he will listen to the voice of his father, now speaking to him from the tomb, let him go to India. Charles is an honest and courageous young man; fit him out with an adventure, and he would die sooner

than not restore to you the sum you have lent him, for you *will* lend him, brother; or you will create for yourself an undying remorse. Oh, if my son should find neither aid nor affection from you, I will pray for God's vengeance upon you! I could have desired not to die in uncertainty of my son's fate; I would have ascertained the truth of your promises in the warmth of your hand—but time fails me. While Charles is on his journey, I must balance my accounts; and I hope to demonstrate by them that my disasters were not caused by error or dishonesty.

"Farewell, brother! May all the blessings of Heaven be yours, for accepting, as I am sure you will, the guardianship I thrust upon you. A voice will incessantly pray for you in that world where we must all one day appear, and where (as you read this) I already am.

"VICTOR-ANGE-GUILLAUME-GRANDET."

Grandet carefully folded this terrible letter and put it in his pocket. Then looking at his nephew, with a humble and timorous air, under which he concealed his emotions and calculations, he said to Charles:

"Have you warmed yourself?"

"Thoroughly, uncle," said Charles.

"Where are our women gone?" continued the miser, forgetting that his nephew was to sleep at his house. But at this moment, Eugenie and her mother returned to the parlor. "Is everything arranged upstairs?" he added, with composure.

"Yes, papa," said Eugenie.

"Then, if you are fatigued, nephew," said Grandet, "Nanon will show you to your room; it is not, to be sure, a very stylish apartment, but you must make allowance for poor vinters who never have a penny to spare; our taxes ruin us."

"Perhaps we intrude on you, Grandet," said the banker. "You probably wish to converse with your nephew, and we will bid you good-evening. I'll see you to-morrow."

VI.

At these words the guests all rose to depart. The notary went for his lantern beside the door, lighted it, and offered to see the Des Grassins home; for the latter, not foreseeing the incident that prematurely terminated their visit, had ordered their servant to come for them at a later hour, and he had not, therefore, arrived.

"Will you do me the honor, madame, to accept my arm?" said the abbé to Madame des Grassins.

"Thank you, my son is here," said the lady, dryly.

"Ladies never compromise themselves in my company," replied the abbé.

"Give your arm to Monsieur Cruchot, my dear," said the husband. And the abbé led her off with so nimble a step that they were soon quite in advance of the rest.

"That young man from Paris is very well-looking," said the abbé. "It is all over with your plans; you must bid good-by to Mademoiselle Grandet unless he happens to be enamored of some Parisian lady. If his affections are not already engaged, your son, Adolphe, will find in him a rival—"

"Not so fast, abbé!" interrupted the lady. "The young man will soon discover that Eugenia is a silly girl, without beauty or complexion. Did you observe her to-night? She was as yellow as a quince."

"Yes," said the abbé, "and very possibly you have already caused the young man to discover it."

"I acknowledge," answered Madame des Grassins, "that I did not refrain from—"

"Nay," replied the abbé, "it is easily done. You have only to place yourself by the side of Eugenie; he has eyes and will make his own comparisons."

"He has promised to dine with me the day after to-morrow," said the lady.

"How could he help it if you desired him to do so?" rejoined the abbé, gallantly.

"What do you mean, abbé, by my desiring it?" said Madame des Grassins.

"Do you wish to give me bad advice? Sir, I have not reached the age of nine-and-thirty and lived a stainless life, to compromise my reputation now for the Empire of the Great Mogul himself. We are both of us of an age to understand the meaning of words. If this young man, who, I allow, is well enough, should be attentive to me, he would forget his cousin; and I know that many a mother in Paris thus devotes herself for the happiness and prosperity of her children; but we are in the provinces, Abbé Cruchot."

"Very true, madame."

"And I would not, nor would my son, purchase all the estates in France at such a price."

"You mistake me, madame," said the abbé. "All I would say is this: An honest woman may allow herself to employ unmeaning coquetries to accomplish a desirable end."

This private conversation was here interrupted by the approach of the remainder of the party.

"It is clear," said the president, "that Monsieur Grandet, of Paris, has sent his son to Saumur on a matrimonial expedition."

"In which case," added the notary, "the cousin is about as acceptable to us as a bombshell."

"Des Grassins," said the banker's wife, "I have invited this young man to dine with us; you must beg Monsieur and Madame de Larsonnier and the Du Hautoys to meet him, not forgetting the pretty Mademoiselle du Hautoy. I trust she will come well dressed. Her mother always bundles her up out of jealousy. I hope, gentlemen," she added, turning to the Cruchots, "that you will do us the honor to be of the party."

"Thank you, madame," replied the notary, and as he spoke the Des Grassins reached their own house.

The Cruchots returned home; and, with that genius for analysis possessed by all inhabitants of the provinces, canvassed the incidents of the evening, which had thus suddenly changed the relative positions of the two rival houses. It is evident that they discussed the matter with great good sense, for they agreed on the necessity of a temporary alliance with their antagonists to defeat the common enemy.

To return to Monsieur Grandet's parlor; when the four relatives were left alone, the old man said to Charles:

"We must now retire to rest, for it is too late to talk about the business that brings you here; we will take a more convenient moment for that, to-morrow. We breakfast at eight; at noon, we take our fruit, a crust of bread and a glass of white wine; and we dine, like Parisians, at five. That's the order of the day. If you wish to see the town and its environs, you are always at liberty to do so; only, you must excuse me, if my affairs do not often permit me to accompany you. Possibly you may hear the people about here say that I am rich. I suffer them to say this, for their talk does no harm to my credit. But it is not true. I am worth little or nothing; and I work in my old age, like a farmer, who has nothing but a sterile field and two strong arms. You yourself will find out what a crown is worth whenever you have to work for it. Here, Nanon, bring a candle."

"I hope, nephew," said Madame Grandet, "that you will find in your room all you require; but if you need anything else, call for Nanon."

"I shall hardly want anything, aunt," said Charles, "for I think I have brought everything with me. Permit me to wish you and my cousin good-night." He then took from Nanon a lighted bougie, a bougie of Anjou, very yellow originally, and grown darker still by lying on the shop-shelf; indeed, it was so similar in appearance to Grandet's own candles, that the miser, incapable of suspecting the existence of such a thing in his house, did not perceive the extravagance.

"I will show you the way," said the old man.

Accordingly he conducted him into the passage that separated the parlor from the kitchen. A door, garnished with a large oval pane of glass, opened thence upon the staircase.

Nanon then barred the outer door; shut

up the parlor; and unchained the wolf-dog in the stable. This animal was singularly ferocious and knew nobody but Nanon; and the two understood each other perfectly.

When Charles beheld the yellow and smoky wall of the stairway and the worm-eaten steps that creaked under the tread of his uncle's feet, his mystification was on *rinforzando*. He thought himself in a hen-roost.

"What the devil did my father send me here for?" said he to himself.

On reaching the first landing-place, he saw three doors painted Etruscan red, without side-posts; and these doors were lost in the dusty wall, secured with naked iron bolts terminating in a representation of flames, as did both ends of the keyhole.

One of these doors—that which was nearest the stairs and opened into a room directly over the kitchen—was evidently fastened up; indeed, the only entrance to this room was through old Grandet's bedroom, and its only window opened toward the garden, and was secured by stout iron gratings. No one, not even Madame Grandet, was permitted to enter here; the miser sat in it alone, like an alchemist in his study. We doubt some secret closet for gold had been constructed there; there were concealed title-deeds and other papers of value; there hung scales to weigh coin; and there, nightly and privately, were pondered and digested plans, speculations, contracts, and the like, in such a manner that men of business, finding Grandet always ready on an emergency, and never taken by surprise, were tempted to believe that he had a fairy or a demon at his control. There, doubtless, while Nanon was snoring loud enough to shake the walls, while the wolf-dog was watching and yawning in the yard, and while his wife and daughter were fast asleep, the old cooper would steal on tiptoe to heap up, to fondle, to caress, to gloat over his gold. The walls were thick, the shutters safe. He alone had the key of this laboratory, where, as he gave out, he made diagrams for planting his fruit-trees and computed the number of casks necessary for his vintage.

The door of Eugenie's room was opposite this fastened-up door; and that leading to the apartments of Madame and Monsieur Grandet, which apartments occupied the entire front of the house, stood in front of the staircase. Madame Grandet's bedroom communicated with Eugenie's by a glass door, while the miser's was separated from his wife's by a board partition and from the mysterious chamber by a thick wall.

The room arranged for Charles was in the garret, directly over old Grandet's rooms, so that he could hear whenever the young man entered or left it.

"Here you are, nephew," said Grandet, as they reached this room; "if you wish to get out, call Nanon, for the dog would eat you up if you went alone. Good-night and pleasant dreams! Ha! the women have given you a fire," he added, in surprise, as the cheerful blaze caught his eye; and at the same moment, seeing Nanon approach with a warming-pan, he continued: "Here comes something else! What's this, Nanon! Do you take my nephew for a sick woman? Carry back your coals."

"But, sir," hazarded Nanon, "the streets are damp, and the gentleman looks as delicate as a woman."

"Go on, then, since you've taken it into your head!" replied the miser, severely, and pushing her by the shoulders; "but take care you do not set us on fire." And he went downstairs grumbling some words which those he left could not understand.

As for Charles, he stood in the midst of his luggage in perfect consternation.

After casting his eyes on the walls of a garret-room, covered with that sort of paper always used to decorate a country inn—on the unornamented chimney-piece of fluted freestone, the very aspect of which gives one a chill—on the yellow chairs of varnished cane which seemed to have more than four angles—on the open night-table, large enough for a sergeant of voltigeurs to stand upright in it—on the scanty rag carpet at the foot

of a tester-bed with chintz curtains—he turned gravely to Nanon and said:

"My good woman, am I really in the house of Monsieur Grandet, the former mayor of Saumur, and brother of Monsieur Grandet of Paris?"

"Yes, sir," replied Nanon, with simplicity, "and a very worthy, excellent man he is. Shall I help you to undo your trunks?"

"Faith," said Charles, recovering a little of his self-possession, though by no means freed from his astonishment, "I should be delighted to have you do so, old trooper! You have served in the marines of the Imperial Guard, haven't you?"

"Ho! ho! oh! oh! what's that?" cried Nanon; "the marines of the Imperial Guard—is it salted?"

"Here," said Charles, more puzzled than ever, "look for my dressing-gown in that valise; this is the key."

Nanon was soon astonished at the sight of a dressing-gown of green silk embroidered with flowers of gold in antique designs. "Are you going to sleep in that?" said she.

"Yes," said Charles.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Nanon, "what a beautiful thing that would be for the front of our parish altar! My dear, sweet, good sir, give that to the Church; you will save your soul if you do. But if you wear it, it will only help you to lose it. Oh, dear! how beautiful you look! I must call Miss Eugenie to see!"

"Stop, Nanon, since that's your name," said Charles, "hold your tongue, and let me go to bed. I'll arrange my things tomorrow, and if this gown pleases your fancy so much, you shall have it to save your own soul. I am too much of a Christian to refuse to give it to you when I go home, and then you may make what use you please of it."

Nanon was motionless with surprise at this munificent liberality, which, however, she could yet hardly believe was seriously intended.

"Give me that splendid dress!" she exclaimed at last, moving toward the door; "he is dreaming already! Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, Nanon," replied Charles, as she closed the door.

"What have I come here for?" he continued, before he fell asleep. "My father is no fool, and he must have had a reason for this journey."

"How handsome my cousin is!" murmured Eugenie to herself, as she broke off her prayers, which, for that night, were left unfinished.

Madame Grandet thought nothing of the matter. However, she heard, through the door of the partition, the miser walking to and fro in his room. Like all timid women, she had studied the character of her husband, and, as the seagull foresees the storm, she now, by certain signs imperceptible to others, foresaw the tempest that was about to agitate his breast. On such occasions, she, to use her own expression, *counterfeited death!*

Old Grandet looked at the door leading to his laboratory, and said to himself, "What a strange idea in my brother to bequeath me his son! A pretty inheritance, truly. I haven't twenty crowns to give away. And what would twenty crowns be to that fop, who stared at my barometer as if he wanted to throw it in the fire?" Probably the old man was more agitated in estimating the consequences of this fatal will than was his brother when he wrote it.

"I shall have that gown of gold!" said Nanon, who, in her sleep, saw herself arrayed in her altar-piece; and, for the first time in her life, dreamed of flowers, and carpets, and damask—as Eugenie did of love.

VII.

THERE are, in the pure and monotonous life of young maidens, certain delicious hours when the sun sheds his rays into the breast; when the flower is the interpreter of thoughts; when the palpitations of the heart communicate to the brain their warm fertility, and dissolve ideas

into a vague longing; hours of innocent sadness and sweet joyousness. When infants first begin to see, they smile; when a girl perceives sentiment in Nature, she, too, like the child, smiles. If light is the first love of life, is not love the first light of the heart? This hour had come for Eugenie.

Matinal—as are all young ladies in the provinces—she rose early the next morning, said her prayers, and commenced the business of the toilet—an important occupation now, and henceforth to be pursued with a definite object. She first combed down smoothly her long chestnut hair, then twisted the thick tresses around the top of her head, carefully braided them, and introduced a symmetry into her coiffure, which set off to advantage the timid ingenuousness of her face, by adapting the simplicity of the accessories to the *naivete* of the lines. Then, washing her hands several times in pure water, which only made them more and more red, she looked at her handsome rounded arms, and asked herself what her cousin could do to make his hands so soft and white, and his nails so well-formed. She put on white stockings and her best-fitting shoes, laced her corsets tightly, without skipping a single eyelet, and, wishing for the first time in her life to appear well, she felt the satisfaction of having a new and becoming dress.

When her toilet was accomplished, she heard the town clock strike, and was astonished to find it no later than seven; the desire of having sufficient time to dress herself well, had induced her to rise too early. As she was ignorant of the art of turning and twisting a curl a dozen different ways to study its effect, she folded her arms, seated herself by the window, and contemplated the court, the narrow garden, and the high terraces that overlooked it; it was a gloomy, circumscribed view, but yet not wanting in the elements of that mysterious beauty peculiar to solitary places and uncultivated nature.

Near the kitchen was a well, surrounded by a curb, and over it a pulley, supported in a branch of curved iron, which was overrun by the red, withered twigs of a grape-vine that extended along the whole length of the house, and thence stretched out its tortuous branches to the woodshed, where the logs lay piled with the uniformity of books in a library. The pavement of the yard had that dark hue produced by time, by moss, by grass, and by the want of being trodden on. The thick walls were clad in a vesture of green, streaked by long, brown lines; and the eight steps which led from the bottom of the yard to the garden, were disjointed and buried under a moss of shrubbery, like the tomb of a knight, interred by his widow, in the time of the Crusades. On the coping of corroded stone was a wooden railing, separating the yard from the garden; it was decayed, and, in some places, fallen through, and the whole was covered with shrubs and creepers.

On each side of the open-work gate the gnarled branches of a stunted apple-tree protruded themselves. The garden was divided by three parallel alleys, separating flower-beds that were confined by borders of box, and at its further extremity, at the foot of the terrace, was an arbor of lindens. On one side were raspberry bushes; and on the other, an immense walnut-tree, that spread its branches almost to the window of the laboratory. A clear light and a bright sun, common to autumnal days on the shores of the Loire, began to dissipate the *gloss* that night had impressed on these picturesque objects.

Eugenie now discovered charms, which she had never before suspected to exist, in the aspect of things around her. A thousand confused ideas sprang up in her mind as the rays of the sun gathered strength; her reflections were in unison with the simplicity of the landscape; and the harmonies of her heart allied themselves to the harmonies of nature.

When the sun reached a part of the wall whence depended the *Venus-hair*, with foliage as variable as the throat of a pigeon, celestial rays of hope lighted up the future for Eugenie, who, from this time forth, loved this side of the wall with

its pale flowers, its blue-bells, and withered leaves, to which a remembrance as agreeable as the recollections of childhood were inseparably connected.

To this calm succeeded the tumultuous emotions. She arose frequently from her seat, stood before her mirror, and studied her form as an honest author ponders over his work, criticising and abusing it.

"I am not handsome enough for him," thought she.

It is true, the poor girl did herself injustice; but modesty, or rather fear, is one of the first qualities of love. Eugenie certainly belonged to a class of females found in the middle ranks of life, whose beauty appears vulgar; but if she resembled the Venus of Milo, she united to the characteristics of that creation the suavity of Christian principles which purified them and gave them a tone unknown to the ancient sculptors. She had a large head; the masculine but delicate forehead of the Jupiter of Phidias; and gray eyes, to which her innocent life imparted a gush of light. The features of her round and rosy face had been exaggerated by the small-pox; a disease that was so mild with her as not to leave its marks, though it had injured the glossiness of her skin, which, nevertheless, was so delicate that her mother's kiss always left for a moment a red mark on her cheek. Her nose was a trifle too prominent, yet it harmonized with her mouth, that was ruddy as a carnation. Her neck was of perfect roundness; her swelling bust attracted attention and set one a dreaming; and her tall figure lacked only acquired grace. There was nothing *pretty* about Eugenie; she was beautiful with that beauty so easily overlooked, and which the artist alone catches, who, searching throughout nature for the model of the celestial purity of the Madonna's countenance, imagined by Raphael, would have immediately discovered the innate nobility of soul that shone through Eugenie's eyes.

Eugenie was still on the threshold of life, where we cull the daisy and the buttercup with a delight unfelt thereafter; and as she passed the glass she said again to herself:

"I am not handsome enough for him."

She then opened her door and listened if any one was stirring.

"*He* has not yet risen," thought she, as she heard Nanon's morning cough, and the various sounds produced by that faithful servant as she swept the parlor, lighted the fire, chained the dog, and talked to the beasts in the stable. Eugenie soon descended and ran to Nanon, who was milking the cow.

"Nanon," said she, "make some cream, good Nanon, for my cousin's breakfast."

"Why, miss," said Nanon, laughing, "I ought to have set it yesterday; I can't *make* cream. How handsome your cousin is!" continued she, gratefully remembering his liberal promise to herself; "he is a darling, a real darling. You didn't see him in his gold and silk bed-gown, as I did. And his linen! why, it's as fine as the curate's surplice."

"Nanon," said Eugenie, "let us have muffins for breakfast."

"And who will give me wood, and flour, and butter?" replied Nanon; who, as Grandet's prime-minister, sometimes assumed great importance in the eyes of both the mother and daughter. "Must I steal from my master to feed your cousin? Go ask him for flour, butter, and fuel; he is your father, and perhaps will give them to you. Here he comes now to give out the provision for the day, and—"

Eugenie escaped into the garden, terrified at hearing the stairs creak under the old man's footsteps. She already felt the effect of that innate modesty and that peculiar consciousness of our own happiness which makes us think, and perhaps not without reason, that our thoughts are engraven on our brow and legible to all whom we meet.

She was not long in discovering the cold destitution of her father's house, and a feeling akin to ill-humor arose in her breast as she reflected on her inability to make her home correspond to the elegance of her cousin. A passionate desire to do something for him took possession of her—and what should it be? She did not know. For the first time in her life

she was afraid of meeting her father; she saw in him the master of her fate, and believed herself guilty of a fault in hiding her thoughts from him. She walked about precipitately, wondering what made the air so pure, the rays of the sun so enlivening, and she began to draw from each a moral warmth and a new existence.

VIII.

WHILE she was endeavoring to invent some plan for obtaining the muffins, a dispute arose between her father and Nanon in the kitchen.

"Is there any of yesterday's bread left, Nanon?" said the miser, unlocking the store-room door.

"Not a crumb, sir," replied Nanon.

Old Grandet took up a large, round loaf, molded in a flat vessel such as they use for baking in Anjou, and was about to cut it, when Nanon said:

"There are five of us to-day, sir."

"That's true," said Grandet; "but your loaves weigh six pounds, so there will be some over. Besides, young men from Paris never eat bread."

"Then they eat *frippe*," said Nanon.

In Anjou, *frippe*—a word of the popular lexicon—means the accompaniments of bread, from the butter spread on a slice of bread, to peach sweetmeats, the most distinguished of *frippes*. But all who in childhood have licked off the *frippe*, and left the bread, will understand Nanon's expression.

"No," replied Grandet; "they eat neither *frippe* nor bread; they are like young women engaged to be married."

After having parsimoniously dealt out the daily fare, and carefully locked his closets and store-room, the old man was turning his steps toward the orchard, when Nanon stopped him, saying:

"Well, then, sir, give me some flour and butter, and I will make a muffin for the children."

"Do you intend," cried old Grandet, sharply, "to put my house to pillage for the sake of my nephew?"

"I don't think any more of your nephew than of your dog," replied Nanon shrewdly, drawing back from a false step; "no, no more than you think of him yourself. You've *happened* to give me only six lumps of sugar," she continued, "and I want eight."

"Why, Nanon," said Grandet, both angry and surprised, "what has got into your head? I have never seen you behave so before. Are you mistress here? You shall have but six lumps."

"Then what will your nephew sweeten his coffee with?" boldly demanded Nanon.

"With two lumps," said Grandet, "and I will do without any."

"You do without sugar at your age?" cried Nanon. "I'd rather buy you some with my own money."

"Mind your own business, Nanon," was all the thanks the poor servant got for her liberality.

Notwithstanding the fall in the price of sugar, that commodity was still the most costly of the old cooper's purchases—and worth always at least six francs a pound, in his estimation. The necessity of economizing it under the Empire had become one of his most unconquerable habits, and was as strong now as when there was occasion for its practice.

However, the silliest woman in the world has sense enough to dissemble when she has a point to gain; and now Nanon abandoned the sugar for the sake of the muffins.

"Mademoiselle Eugenie," cried she, out of the window, "didn't you say you wanted a muffin for breakfast?"

"No, no," said Eugenie in alarm.

"Well, Nanon," said Grandet, at the sound of his daughter's voice, "take these," and he gave her some flour and a few ounces of butter, in addition to the piece he had previously cut off.

"I must have some wood for the oven," continued the inexorable Nanon.

"Take what you need," replied Grandet, in a sorrowful tone; "but while you are about it, you must make a fruit-tart, and cook the dinner in the oven, so that you will not want two fires."

"Oh, you need not tell me that," said

Nanon, knowingly; and her master bestowed on her a look almost paternal at a reply so consonant to his wishes.

After a time old Grandet returned from the orchard with the fruit, and when he had arranged the first dishful on the kitchen table, Nanon remarked:

"Do see, sir, what handsome boots your nephew wears! What beautiful leather! and how nicely it smells! must I brush them with your egg blacking?"

"I believe, Nanon," replied Grandet, "that the egg would spoil that leather. You must tell him that you don't know how to polish morocco, and then he will buy some blacking for himself."

"Do you not intend," said Nanon, "to have meat once or twice a week on account of—"

"Yes."

"Shall I go to market?"

"No. The farmers will furnish chickens, and I will tell Cornoiller to shoot some crows—they make the best soup in the world."

"Don't those birds eat dead people?"

"You're a fool, Nanon! They eat as every one does, just what they can get. Don't we all live on dead people? What are inheritances?"

Grandet now looked at his watch, and finding that he had a good half-hour before breakfast, went to Eugenie, and, kissing her, said:

"Would you like to take a walk along the river in my meadows? I have something to do there."

Eugenie went for her straw bonnet, lined with pink, and father and daughter walked down the street toward the Loire.

"Where are you going so early?" said the notary, Cruchot, meeting them.

"To see about something," said Grandet.

Whenever Father Grandet went to *see about something*, the notary knew by experience that something was to be gained from him; so he accompanied him.

"Come along, Cruchot," said Grandet; "since you are a friend of mine, I will show you the folly of planting poplars in a good soil."

Cruchot opened his eyes in amazement.

"Do you reckon for nothing," said he, "the sixty thousand francs you touched for your poplars? What a lucky man you were! to fell your trees at the very moment when whitewood was scarce in Nantes, and sell them at thirty francs each."

"Cruchot," said Grandet, as they reached his magnificent prairies on the banks of the Loire, where thirty laborers were busy clearing, filling, and leveling the ground lately occupied by the poplars, "see how much soil a poplar takes! thirty-two feet for each one. Now, on this line I had three hundred poplars. Three hun—hun—hundred times thirty—t—t—t—two f—f—feet: take tw—tw—twice as much on the sides, is fifteen hundred; the rows in the middle as much more; now p—p—p—put three th—th—th—thousand stacks of hay—"

"Well," said Cruchot, to help his friend along, "three thousand stacks of hay, like this, are worth eighteen hundred francs."

"S—s—say two thousand on account of the second crop," said Grandet. "Well, ca—ca—calculate what two th—th—thousand francs a year for f—f—f—forty years with comp—p—pound in—in—in—interest, wh—wh—which, you know—"

"Call it a hundred thousand francs," said the notary.

"Agreed!" replied Grandet; "it is just one h—h—hundred thousand francs. Well, then," continued he, stammering no longer, "two thousand five hundred poplars in forty years produced but seventy-five thousand francs. It is a loss, you see; I found that out; I, myself," and he raised himself up in his shoes as he made the disclosure. "Hereafter," he continued, "I am going to plant poplars on the very edge of the river; they will then grow at the expense of the government;" and as he spoke, he gave to the wen on his nose a slight motion, equivalent to an ironical smile of the lips.

The stupefied Cruchot was ready to adore the sagacity of Grandet. "It is clear," said he, "that poplars should be planted in a barren soil."

"You are right," said the cooper.

Eugenie regarded the sublime scenery of the Loire without heeding her father's calculations; but she lent an ear when Cruchot said to Grandet:

"So you have sent for your nephew from Paris. It's the town-talk of Saumur; and I suppose I shall soon have to draw up the contract."

"Y—y—y—you have got up very early in the m—m—m—morning t—t—t—to tell me that," said Grandet, with a movement of his wen. "But my old c—c—c—comrade, I will be frank and t—t—t—tell you what you w—w—wish to find out. I would sooner throw my daughter in the Loire than to give her to her cousin; you may an—an—an—announce that. But no; l—l—let them talk."

This answer fell upon Eugenie like a thunderbolt. All her fair visions and bright hopes were annihilated by a word. She had, in imagination, attached herself to Charles by every tie that binds souls together; and henceforth sorrow was to strengthen them. Is it not the destiny of woman to be more touched by the pomp of woe than with the splendors of fortune?

"How," thought she, bitterly, "have the feelings of a father been extinguished in my father's heart?" Of what crime was her cousin guilty? Already her growing affection, itself a mystery to her, invested Charles with mystery. She returned toward her home, trembling in every limb; and when she reached the old dark street, so cheerful to her at the commencement of her walk, she found that its aspect was sad, and breathed of the melancholy that time and things had shed over it. She wanted not one of the signs of love.

As they approached the house, she left her father's side, ran on before him, knocked at the door, and waited for him to come up; but he stopped short as he saw a newspaper in Cruchot's hand.

"How are stocks?" said he.

Cruchot opened the paper, which he had just received by the post from Paris, saying: "You had better take my advice; there is still twenty per cent to be gained in two years besides the high interest they bear; five thousand livres a year interest, for eighty thousand francs capital; they are now at 80*f.* 50*c.*"

"We will see about it," replied Grandet, stroking his chin.

"My God!" exclaimed Cruchot.

"What's the matter?" said Grandet.

Cruchot handed him the paper, pointed to a paragraph, and said, merely: "Read that."

The miser took the paper and read:

"Monsieur Grandet, one of the most respectable merchants of Paris, yesterday shot himself through the head, after appearing on 'change as usual. He had previously sent his resignation to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, and also resigned his office at the Tribunal de Commerce. The failure of Messieurs A. & S., his banker and notary, ruined him. The high consideration in which Monsieur Grandet was held, and the credit he enjoyed, was such, that, without doubt, he could have obtained relief at the Place de Paris. It is deeply to be regretted that this truly honorable man should have yielded to the first burst of despair," etc.

"I knew this," said Grandet to the notary; and the words froze the blood of the latter, despite his professional impassibility, when he reflected that probably the unfortunate man had applied for aid to his rich brother and been refused.

"And his son so cheerful last night—"

"He knows nothing of it yet," replied Grandet, with the same composure.

"Good-morning, Monsieur Grandet," said Cruchot, hastening off with his news to reassure the desponding president.

IX.

When Grandet entered his house, he found the breakfast ready. Madame Grandet, on whose neck Eugenie leaped with that overflowing of the heart, caused by sudden and secret sorrow, was already on her perched-up chair, busily knitting sleeves for the winter.

"You need not wait," said Nanon,

coming softly downstairs; "the boy sleeps like a cherubim! How handsome he looks with his eyes shut!"

"Let him sleep," said Grandet; "he will wake soon enough to hear bad news."

"What has happened?" inquired Eugenie, alarmed at the tone in which her father spoke; her mother had not dared to ask the question.

"His father has blown his brains out," said Grandet, coolly.

"My uncle!" exclaimed Eugenie.

"Poor young man!" exclaimed her mother.

"Yes, poor enough!" said Grandet; "he is not worth a sou."

"Well, he sleeps as if he was king of the whole earth," said Nanon, in a subdued done.

Eugenie was unable to eat. Her heart was wrung as a woman's heart is always wrung, when, for the first time, compassion, excited by the misfortunes of him she loves, takes possession of her whole being. She dropped her fork and wept aloud.

"You did not know your uncle!" said her father, giving her a look like that of a famished tiger; "why do you cry?"

"Sir," said Nanon, sturdily, "who could help feeling sorry for this poor young man, who sleeps like a top, and does not know what is in store for him?"

"Hold your tongue, Nanon," said the miser; "I am not speaking to you."

Eugenie learned at this moment that a woman who loves should always conceal her feelings. She made no reply.

"Nothing must be said to him about this till my return," said Grandet. "I am going now to mark out the line for trenching the meadows, but I will be back at noon for lunch. After that I will tell my nephew his situation. As for you, mademoiselle," he added, turning to Eugenie, "if it is for that coxcomb you are crying, we have had enough of it. He shall start right off for India, and you will not see him again." And, so saying, he went to his meadows.

"Oh, mother! I am suffocating!" cried poor Eugenie, the moment they were alone.

Madame Grandet, seeing her daughter deadly pale, opened the window to give her air.

"I am better now," said Eugenie, in a few moments.

This strong emotion, developed in a nature until now apparently calm and cold, reached even Madame Grandet, who gazed at her daughter with that sympathetic intuition that all mothers are endowed with, and guessed the truth. And, indeed, the life of the celebrated Hungarian sisters, attached to each other by an error of nature, was not more intimate than that of Eugenie and her mother.

"My poor child!" said she, clasping Eugenie in her arms and placing Eugenie's head on her bosom, "my poor child!"

At this expression of tenderness, Eugenie raised her head, interrogated her mother's face with a scrutinizing look, as if to read her inmost thoughts, and said, in reply: "Why send him to India? If he is unhappy, ought he not to remain here among his relatives?"

"That would seem most natural, my child," replied her mother; "but your father has his reasons, and we must respect them."

The mother and daughter seated themselves in silence; one on her high seat, the other in her low armchair, and both resumed their work. After a few moments, Eugenie, oppressed with gratitude for the sympathy that her mother had shown, kissed Madame Grandet's hand, exclaiming: "Dear mother! how good you are!"

These words caused the old maternal face, dimmed by many sorrows, to irradiate with pleasure.

"Do you think him handsome?" pursued Eugenie.

Madame Grandet replied by a smile only; but, after an interval of silence, she said, in a low voice:

"Can it be that you love him already? That would be unfortunate."

"Why so?" replied Eugenie. "He pleases you, he pleases Nanon, and why shouldn't he please me? Come, mam-

ma, let us set the table for his breakfast."

She accordingly flung her work aside, and her mother did the same. Eugenie then called Nanon.

"What do you want now, Mademoiselle?" said the servant.

"You can get the cream ready by noon, Nanon?" asked Eugenie.

"Oh, yes; certainly."

"And, Nanon, make his coffee very strong," continued Eugenie. "I have heard Monsieur des Grassins say that they make coffee very strong in Paris."

"And where do you expect me to get it?"

"Buy it."

"And if the old gentleman meets me?"

"He has gone to the meadows."

"I'll run, then," said Nanon. "But remember, the grocer, when I went to buy the bougie, asked me if the three Magi were at our house. The whole town will find out our doings, and it may come back to your father."

"And if it should," added Madame Grandet, "your father is capable of beating us."

"Well," answered Eugenie, "if he beats us, we will receive the blows on our knees."

Madame Grandet raised her eyes to heaven, and Nanon vanished. Eugenie spread a clean cloth on the table, and went into the garret for some bunches of grapes which she had hung on the ropes there. She stepped lightly along the corridor, so as not to disturb her cousin, and as she passed his door, she could not forbear to pause a moment and listen to his measured breathing.

"Sorrow watches while he sleeps," thought she.

She then went into the garden for the greenest vine-leaves, and arranged her grapes as coquettishly as an experienced butler could have done. She levied on the pears in the kitchen, which, however, her father had counted, and disposed them in pyramids among the leaves. She came, went, ran, jumped. She would willingly have pillaged the house, but her father had all the keys.

Nanon returned with two fresh eggs, and when Eugenie spied them, she was ready to hug the woman for joy.

"The farmer of La Lande, Cornoiller," said Nanon, "had a basket of them, and he gave me these, to make himself agreeable, the old fellow!"

At length, after two hours of assiduity, during which Eugenie quitted her work twenty times to superintend the boiling of the coffee, and to listen to the noise her cousin made in rising, she succeeded in preparing a very simple and inexpensive breakfast, yet a breakfast that was terribly out of keeping with the customs of the house.

The mid-day meal was always eaten standing, and consisted of a little bread, with fruit or butter, and a glass of wine. As Eugenie now cast a look at the table, drawn to the side of the fire—at the arm-chair in front of her cousin's plate, the two dishes of fruit, the egg-cup, and the bottle of wine, the bread, and the sugar heaped on a saucer, she trembled from head to foot, for she just then thought what her father's look would be if he should come in at that moment; and she watched the clock with great anxiety, calculating in her own mind the chances that her cousin would have time to breakfast before her father returned.

"Do not feel badly about this, my dear," said her mother, perceiving her anxiety; "if your father comes, I will take it upon myself."

"My dear, dear mother!" exclaimed Eugenie, and her eyes filled with tears as she spoke, "I have never loved you half enough until now."

The object of all this disturbance, this solicitude, this sudden though deep affection, after making a thousand turns in his room, interspersed with whistling and singing, at last descended to the parlor. He had made his toilet with as much nicety and care as if he were in the chateau of the noble lady who was traveling in Scotland. He entered with the affable and smiling air so becoming to youth, and which Eugenie beheld with a sorrowful satisfaction. He had taken in good part his disappointment about the cha-

teau in Anjou, and accosting his aunt in a cheerful tone :

"I hope you rested well last night, my dear aunt, and you, my cousin?" said he.

"Quite well, I thank you," answered Madame Grandet; "how did you rest?"

"Oh, I slept delightfully."

"You must be hungry," said Eugenie, "and your breakfast is ready."

"I never breakfast before noon at home," said Charles, "and that is my usual hour for rising; but here I will be governed by you." He then pulled out his watch, the most delicious little flat watch that Breguet ever made. "It is but eleven," he added; "I am quite early."

"Early!" echoed Madame Grandet.

"Early," said Charles; "but I wanted to arrange my affairs; and now I will willingly eat something—any trifle : a fowl, or a partridge."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Nanon to herself, as she overheard the last remark.

"A partridge!" thought Eugenie; and at the moment she would have given all her savings for a partridge.

"Take a seat at the table," said Madame Grandet.

The dandy sank into the armchair as a pretty woman seats herself on a divan. Eugenie and her mother took chairs near him.

"Do you live here all the time?" asked Charles, who found the room more unsightly by day than by candle-light.

"Always," replied Eugenie, "except in the vintage, when we go to help Nanon, and lodge in the Abbey of Noyers."

"Do you never walk out?" pursued Charles.

"Sometimes of a Sunday, after vespers, if the weather is fine," said his aunt, "we go on the bridge, or into the meadows, when they are mown."

"Have you a theater here?" inquired the young man.

"What!" exclaimed Madame Grandet. "Do you ever go to a play, and look at actors? Do you not know that that is a mortal sin?"

"Here, my dear sir," said Nanon, bringing in the eggs, "we will give you chickens in the shell."

"Ah, fresh eggs!" said Charles, who, like all people accustomed to luxury, had forgotten about the partridge; "these will be delicious if you bring me some butter with them."

"Butter!" cried Nanon, bluntly; "very well; then you can't have the muffins."

"Bring the butter, Nanon!" said Eugenie.

Meantime, the young lady watched her cousin cutting his bread in strips, and took as much interest in the sight as the most sensitive grisette of Paris could take in seeing a melodrama performed in which innocence is triumphant. It is true, Charles's manners were as coquettish, as elegant, and as thoroughbred as those of the most fastidious female; for he had been educated by a kind and graceful mother, and accomplished by a lady *a la mode*.

There is, in the pity and tenderness of a young girl, an influence really magnetic; and Charles, finding himself the object of his cousin's and aunt's kind attention, could not escape the power of sentiments which, so to speak, inundated him. He gave Eugenie a look full of kindness and affection; and perceived, as he regarded her longer, the exquisite harmony of feature in her pure face, her natural grace, and the magic clearness of her eyes, where sparkled the freshest, earliest thoughts of love.

"Upon my word, my fair cousin," said he, "if you were in a front box, and full dress, at the opera, you would make the men covetous, and the women jealous."

This compliment caused Eugenie's heart to palpitate with joy, yet she said timidly :

"Do not, cousin, make a jest of a poor, simple provincial."

"If you knew me," said Charles, "you would know that I abhor raillery. It withers the heart and chills the feelings. The reason of this dislike may be," he added, "that I have no wit to make fun of others; and, indeed, this defect is a great disadvantage to me; for in Paris a man is all the same as assassinated by the

saying, 'He is very good-hearted,' which means, 'He is as stupid as a rhinoceros.' But as I am rich, and known to be a dead shot with a pistol, the jesters pay me a certain deference."

"What you say, nephew, gives proof of a good heart," said the aunt.

"You have a beautiful ring," said Eugenie; "is it rude to ask to see it?"

Charles held forth his hand as he took the ring from his finger, and Eugenie blushed as she touched his rosy nails.

"See, mamma, how beautiful it is!" said she.

"It is solid gold!" exclaimed Nanon, who had just brought in the coffee.

"What's that?" said Charles, eying suspiciously the brown, glazed earthenware coffee-pot, with a ring of ashes around the bottom.

"It is boiled coffee," said Nanon.

"My dear aunt," replied Charles, "I shall leave at least one benevolent token of my sojourn with you. I will teach you how to make coffee in a coffee-pot, à la Chaptal." And he attempted to explain the plan of the Chaptal coffee-pot.

"Well!" said Nanon, after hearing him out, "if it has as many fussifications as that comes to, it would take a lifetime to understand it. *I* shall never make coffee after that fashion. I wonder who would cut the grass for the cow, while I was about the coffee?"

"I would!" cried Eugenie, not knowing exactly what she said, but eager to remove all obstacles from a course recommended by Charles.

"Child!" exclaimed her mother, gazing fondly at her. And at this moment, as if by common consent, the grief about to overwhelm this thoughtless and unfortunate young man, seemed to come to the recollection of the three women; they became silent, and regarded him with looks of commiseration that arrested his attention.

"What is the matter, cousin?" said he.

"Hush!" said Madame Grandet to Eugenie, who was about to reply; "you know your father intends to speak to Monsieur—"

"Call me Charles," interrupted the young man.

"Is your name Charles? What a pretty name!" said Eugenie.

Misfortunes anticipated—troubles which have a vague, indefinable presentiment—almost always come upon us; and now these three women, who had thought of and dreaded the premature return of old Grandet from the meadows, were startled at his knock.

"That's papa!" said Eugenie; and she seized the saucer of sugar from the table, leaving, however, some lumps on the cloth. Nanon carried off the egg-cup and shells, and Madame Grandet stood up like a frightened doe. There was, in short, a universal panic, and Charles, on his part, was, for a moment, lost in astonishment.

"What is the matter?" he asked again.

"Papa is coming," said Eugenie.

"And what then?" continued Charles.

The old man entered, cast a scrutinizing look over the table, and understood the whole in a moment.

"So!" said he, "you have been feasting, nephew? Well! Very well! Extremely well! When the cat is on the roof, the mice may play on the floor."

"Feasting!" thought Charles, unable to suspect what were the customs of the house.

"Give me my glass, Nanon," said the miser.

Eugenie brought it to him. He drew from his pocket a broad-bladed knife, cut with it a slice of bread, a small bit of butter, spread it carefully, and ate without sitting down. At this moment, Charles was sweetening his coffee. Old Grandet had already seen the lumps of sugar; he now looked at his wife, who turned pale; he went up to her and whispered, "Where did you get all this sugar?"

"Nanon bought it at Grondard's," she said in the same low tone.

Charles tasted his coffee, found it not sweet enough, and looked for the sugar.

"What are you looking for?" said the old man.

"The sugar," said Charles; "it was here a moment ago."

"Put in more milk," replied the master of the house; "that will weaken your coffee."

Eugenie brought back the saucer, looking with a collected air into her father's face. The Parisian woman, who, to facilitate the flight of her lover, sustains with her own feeble arm the silken ladder by which he is descending, shows no more devoted courage than Eugenie displayed when she replaced the saucer. Besides, the lover would recompense his mistress for her wounded arm; he would bathe with tears, and cure with kisses every swollen vein; but Charles would never know, and therefore, never strive to atone for the pain that rent his cousin's heart as she now endured her father's frown.

"You do not eat, wife," said Grandet. The poor woman came forward, cut sorrowfully a piece of bread, and took a pear. Eugenie audaciously offered some grapes to her father, saying: "Papa, won't you taste my sweetmeats? You will take some, too, won't you, cousin?" she added.

"Nephew! nephew!" cried old Grandet, "if a stop is not put to this, all Saumur will be ruined on your account! When you have breakfasted we will take a turn in the garden. I have some sad news for you."

Eugenie and her mother looked at Charles with an expression that he could not mistake.

"Sad news, uncle," said he. "Since the death of my poor mother"—and here his voice faltered—"no misfortune can happen to me!"

"My dear nephew," said his aunt, "who can tell by what afflictions God will try us?"

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" said old Grandet, "that's nonsense! I am sorry, nephew, to see your hands so white and pretty." He then extended his own brawny and huge members, saying:

"These are the hands to pick up crowns! But you have been brought up to put your feet into such leather as they make pocketbooks of. It's all wrong!"

"What are you talking about, uncle?" said Charles. "May I be hanged if I understand a word you say!"

"Come with me," said Grandet, shutting his knife with a snap, finishing his glass, and opening the door, and the two walked into the garden.

X.

Old Grandet felt not the slightest embarrassment in being forced to inform Charles of his father's death; but he *was* touched with a sort of compassion on reflecting that the young man was penniless; and it was with a view to soften this cruel truth that he hesitated a little, and endeavored to frame his speech in a manner suiting the occasion.

It was nothing to say, "You have lost your father!" for fathers are expected to die before their children; but to say "you have not a penny in the world!" *that* comprised every ill, every woe, every misfortune that humanity is heir to! And the old man, with the gravel creaking under his shoes, walked up the middle path of the garden in silence.

Our attention is always riveted to the places where either pleasure or sorrow bursts on us unexpectedly; and Charles, now, as he walked in silent and terrible apprehension, noted, with the minutest care, the borders of box, the withered and falling leaves, the dilapidation of the walls, the fantastical forms of the fruit-trees; picturesque details to remain forever engraven on his memory, blended and identified with that tremendous hour by a kind of mnemonics peculiar to the passions.

"The weather is very warm and fine," began old Grandet.

"Yes, uncle," said Charles, "but—"

"Well, my boy," replied Grandet, "I have bad news to tell you. Your father is very ill."

"Then why am I here?" cried Charles, greatly distressed; "I must go immediately—"

"It is useless!" replied Grandet, in a tone which revealed the truth to Charles; and as the young man stood transfixed at this astounding intelligence, his uncle went on. "Yes, my poor boy! you have guessed it. Your father is dead. But that's nothing; there is something more serious; he shot himself—"

"My father shot—"

"Yes, but that's nothing; the newspapers smooth that over; here is the misfortune," and he pointed out the paragraph.

Charles, who was scarcely yet more than a boy, and still of an age when the feelings show themselves undisguisedly, burst into tears, without reading the paper.

"Come, that's good," said Grandet to himself; "his eyes frightened me. He sheds tears; he is safe. All this is nothing, my poor nephew," he continued, aloud; "you will console yourself for your father, but here—"

"Never! never!" exclaimed Charles, passionately; "my father! my poor father!"

"But," said Grandet, resolved to apprise his nephew of what he conceived to be the greatest part of the misfortune, "but I tell you, you are ruined; your property is lost!"

"What is that to me," said Charles; "give me back my father!"

His sobs and groans rung fearfully through the narrow inclosure for a few moments; then, without listening further, he rushed from the garden, sought his own room, flung himself on the bed, and buried his face in the clothes, to weep unmolested.

"We must let the first shower go over," said Monsieur Grandet, as he returned to the parlor, where Eugenie and her mother had hastily reseated themselves when they saw him approach.

Eugenie shuddered to hear her father speak thus of the most sacred of sorrows, and from that moment she began to judge his character.

"Poor young man!" said Madame Grandet.

The miser, who himself had not been undisturbed by this scene, was recalled by this remark to the antecedent circumstances; and, looking at his wife, at Eugenie, and the saucer of sugar, he remembered the extraordinary breakfast prepared for his unhappy nephew, and took his stand in the middle of the room.

"I expect now, madame," said he, "that you will discontinue this extravagance. I do not give you *my* money to stuff the young fellow with sugar."

"My mother had nothing to do with it," said Eugenie, intrepidly; "it was I who—"

"Is it because you are of age," interrupted the old man, "that you wish to cross me? Remember, Eugenie—"

"Papa," said Eugenie, "your brother's son ought not to wait for—"

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" again interrupted Grandet, in four chromatic notes; "it's my brother's son here, and my nephew there. Charles is nothing to us; he has neither francs nor sous. His father has failed; and when the boy has cried his belly full, he shall decamp. He shan't stay here to revolutionize my house."

"What is it to fail, papa?" asked Eugenie.

"To fail," said her father, "is to commit the most dishonorable act of which a man is capable."

"It must be a great sin, then," rejoined Madame Grandet, "and our brother will be eternally damned."

"There you are again with your litanies," replied the old man, with a shrug. "To fail, Eugenie, is to commit a theft, which, unfortunately, the law takes under its protection. People confided their property to William Grandet on his reputation for honor and probity; he took it all, and left them nothing but their eyes to weep for their losses. The highway robber is preferable to the bankrupt, for he assaults you, and you may perhaps defend yourself; he risks his own life, while the other—in a word, Charles is himself dishonored."

These words went straight to the heart of the noble girl to whom they were addressed, and weighed it down in bitterness. She knew not the world's maxims,

nor its insidious arguments, nor its sophisms. She therefore received the atrocious explanation that her father had given of bankruptcy, without knowing how to draw the distinction between an involuntary and a premeditated failure.

"Papa," continued Eugenie, "could you not have prevented this misfortune?"

"My brother did not consult me," said the old man, briefly; "besides, he owes three millions."

"What are three millions?" asked the daughter, with the simplicity of a child who expects to find out at once all it desires to know.

"Three millions," said Grandet, "are three millions of pieces of twenty sous each."

"Dear me," exclaimed the young lady, "how could my uncle ever have had three millions all his own! Is there any other person in France who has three millions?"

Grandet stroked his chin, smiled, and his wen seemed to dilate.

"What will become of Cousin Charles?" demanded Eugenie.

"He will set out at once for India," replied Grandet, "where his father desired he might be sent, to make his fortune."

"But has he any money to take him there?" said Eugenie.

"I," said Grandet, "will pay his expenses—as far as Nantes."

"My dear father, how good you are!" cried Eugenie, clasping him around the neck. Indeed, she embraced him so fervently that he began to feel ashamed, for his conscience rebelled a little at his present course of conduct.

"Does it take long, papa," continued Eugenie, "to make a million?"

"Bless me!" replied the old man. "You know what a louis is? Well, it takes fifty thousand of them to make a million."

"Mamma," said Eugenie, "we will make a nine days' prayer for him in the church."

"I was just thinking of it," said her mother.

"That's right! spend your money!" cried the miser. "Do you think there are hundreds and thousands here?"

At this moment a heavy groan from Charles's room resounded through the house, and froze Eugenie and her mother with terror.

"Nanon," cried Grandet, "go and see if the young man is making away with himself!" Then, turning to his wife and daughter, who were even more alarmed at his words than at the noise they heard, he said, "Come, don't make fools of yourselves! I am going out for a while; I must see the Hollanders, who go home to-day, and I want to talk over some things with Cruchot."

When he shut the door, the mother and daughter breathed more freely. Never before this day had Eugenie felt any restraint in her father's presence; but a few hours now had changed her very nature.

"Mamma," said she, "for how many louis do they sell a pipe of wine?"

"Your father sells his," replied her mother, "for a hundred and fifty or two hundred francs, and sometimes for three hundred, as I have heard."

"Then," said Eugenie, "when he makes fourteen hundred pipes—"

"My dear child," interrupted her mother, "I don't know how much that makes; your father never tells me about his affairs."

"Papa must be rich," continued Eugenie.

"Perhaps so," replied Madame Grandet; "but Monsieur Cruchot told me he purchased Froidfond two years ago. That must have embarrassed him."

Eugenie, no longer understanding anything, stopped her calculations.

"He did not even see me," said Nanon, returning from the garret, where she had been to learn what was the matter with Charles; "he is stretched out like a calf on the bed, and he weeps like a Magdalen."

"Let us go and console him, mamma," said Eugenie; "if we hear a knock we can hurry back before Nanon opens the door."

XI.

THEY repaired to Charles's room accordingly, where they found him as described by Nanon. He turned his head as they entered.

"I have lost my father!" he cried, "my poor father! If he had but confided to me the secret of his misfortunes, we might have labored to repair them. My dear, good father! I was so sure of seeing him again that I believe I took leave of him very coolly."

"We will pray earnestly to God for him, nephew," said Madame Grandet; "and you, Charles, resign yourself to the will of Heaven."

"Take courage, cousin!" added Eugenie, "the loss of your father is irreparable; let us now think," she added, resolving, with the natural tact of a woman, to turn the current of his grief into another channel, "how your own honor may be saved."

"My honor!" exclaimed Charles, sitting upright on the bed, and throwing back his hair—"true! true! my uncle said my father was a bankrupt! Leave me, cousin and aunt! Leave me, I beseech you! How my father must have suffered!"

There was something painfully attractive in this grief, so youthful, so uncalculating, and unselfish. It was a sincere sorrow, and the aunt and cousin comprehended it when Charles, by a gesture, begged them to leave him to himself. They, therefore, returned to the parlor, took their seats by the window in silence, and sewed for an hour without speaking.

Eugenie had seen, in the hasty look she cast around her cousin's room—a look in which young women see everything with a glance—the bagatelles of his toilet; his scissors and razors ornamented with gold, and all the accessories in a style of richness wholly new to her; and this vista of opulence seen through grief and poverty, rendered Charles, by contrast, still more fascinating. Never before had so grave an event, so dramatic a spectacle, presented itself to the imagination of these women, who were continually buried in the solitude of a monotonous life.

"Mamma," said Eugenie at length, "we must wear mourning for my uncle?"

"Your father will decide that matter, my dear," said her mother.

They again relapsed into silence, and Eugenie drew her stitches with irregularity of motion, that showed how deep were her meditations. Her chief desire at the moment was, in some way, to share the sorrow of her cousin.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, a sharp knock at the door went to Madame Grandet's heart.

"What is the matter with your father, I wonder?" said she.

And presently the miser entered the room, in great rejoicing. After taking off his gloves, he rubbed his hands hard enough to take off the skin, if the epidermis had not been as tough as leather; he walked about the room, observed the weather, and at last his secret escaped him.

"Wife," said he, without the slightest obstruction in his speech, "I have got the weather-gage of them all. My wine is sold! The Dutchmen and Belgians were to leave town this morning, so I walked about the square before their hotel, as carelessly as if I was thinking of nothing. Snooks—you know who I mean—came toward me. The wine-holders had all agreed to keep their wine for a better price; I did not discourage them from doing so! Thepurchasers were in despair. I saw it; and concluded my bargain on my own terms. They take my vintage at a hundred crowns the pipe, half the money paid down in gold; the bonds are drawn for the balance; and here are six louis for you. In three months wines will fall."

The last sentence was pronounced in a quiet tone, but a tone so profoundly sarcastic, that, could the people of Saumur, grouped together in the square, and overwhelmed by the news of Grandet's sale—could they, I say, have heard it, a general panic would have ensued, and reduced the price of wine fifty per cent on the instant.

"You have a thousand pipes this year, papa?" said Eugenie.

"Yes, *fifille*," replied the old man, using a word that he always addressed

to her when he wished to utter an expression of superlative joy.

"That makes three hundred thousand pieces of twenty sous?" continued Eugenie.

"Yes, Mademoiselle Grandet."

"Then, papa, you can assist Charles."

The astonishment, the stupefaction of Belshazzar, when he saw the writing on the wall, was nothing to the freezing wrath of old Grandet, when he found his nephew, whose very existence he had forgotten, lodged in his daughter's heart and calculations. His tone, his manner, his very nature, seemed to change as he replied:

"Ever since this fop has put his foot in my house, things have gone wrong. You take upon yourselves to buy sugar for him, and to make preparations as if for a wedding or a feast. I will have no more of such doings. I am old enough to know how to conduct myself, and, at all events, I shall take no lessons from my daughter nor from any one else. I will do what is proper for my nephew, and neither of you need meddle. As for you, Eugenie, if you open your lips to me again about him, I will send you to the Abbey of Noyers with Nanon; and, if you pout, you shall start to-morrow. Where is the boy—hasn't he come downstairs yet?"

"Not yet," said Madame Grandet.

"Why, what is he about?" said the miser.

"He is weeping for his father," replied Eugenie.

The miser looked at Eugenie a moment and was silent—he, too, was a father.

After having made a few turns in the parlor, he went nimbly to his laboratory, there to cogitate about an investment in the public funds. The clearing of his two thousand acres of woodland had brought him fifteen hundred thousand francs, which, with the amounts received for his poplars, and exclusive of the hundred thousand crowns received for his vintage, carried his income for the year to two millions, four hundred thousand francs. The news he had learned through Cruchot that stocks were selling at 80*f.* 50*c.*, tempted him greatly to make the speculation; and he figured out its result on the newspaper that contained the account of his brother's death.

While absorbed in these estimates, Nanon knocked against the wall to apprise him that dinner was ready. He obeyed the summons mechanically, pondering as he went; and when he reached the last step of the stairs, he muttered to himself:

"Since I shall receive my interest at eight per cent, I will make this purchase. In two years I shall get from it four millions, which I can draw from Paris in gold."

He entered the parlor, and asked for Charles.

"He says he does not want any dinner," replied Nanon.

"That's so much saved," said Grandet, complacently. "But he won't cry forever; hunger drives the wolf out of the woods."

The dinner was eaten in silence. When the cloth was removed, Madame Grandet ventured to say:

"We must put on mourning for your brother."

"It really seems to me, madame," replied the miser, "that you have nothing to do but invent ways to spend money. Mourning is in the heart, not in the dress."

"But it is indispensable," persisted the wife, "to wear mourning for a brother; and the Church commands us to—"

"Well, well," said Grandet, impatiently, "buy your mourning with your six louis, and out of it you may give me a crape for my hat; that will do for me."

Eugenie raised her eyes to heaven, without trusting herself to say a word. Her generous propensities, so long dormant, for want of an object, were now for the first time aroused, and her soul was wounded in proportion as they were thwarted.

The evening that ensued was, to all outward appearance, spent as a thousand other evenings had been; but it was, in fact, the most dismal and unhappy of the whole. Eugenie plied her needle, but did not make use of the work-box that Charles had disdained, Madame Grandet knitted

her sleeves, and the old man twirled his fingers and looked at the fire for hours together, absorbed in calculations, the result of which would, on the morrow, astonish all Saumur.

No one that day or evening came to visit the Grandets, for all were busy in discussing the old man's ingenious trick in the sale of his wine, the failure of his brother, and the arrival of his nephew. The proprietors of the principal vineyards, the higher and middling classes of the inhabitants, assembled at the house of Monsieur des Grassins, where the most terrible imprecations were fulminated against the wily cooper.

Meantime, old Grandet, after seeing himself, in perspective, the proprietor of fourteen millions in three years, broke off his meditations by saying :

"It is bed-time. I will bid my nephew good-night for all of us, and see if he wants anything."

Madame Grandet followed him quietly, and stopped at the first landing-place to listen. Eugenie, bolder and more curious, ascended two steps of the second flight of stairs.

"I see you are still in trouble, nephew," he said. "It is natural you should weep; a father is a father. But you must take your misfortune patiently. While you have been mourning, I have been thinking about you; for, as you will find, I am a kind relative. Come, be of good courage. Will you take a small glass of wine?"

It will be recollected that wine in Saumur is like tea in India; it is the common drink, and costs nothing.

"But," pursued Grandet, "you are in the dark; that's bad! we must see clearly into all we do." He went to the mantelpiece and lighted the candle. "How!" cried he, in astonishment; "what's this! a bougie! Where the devil did they get this from? The minxes will pull up the floor, next, to cook the boy's egg!"

And on hearing these words, both mother and daughter flew from their listening places, and precipitated themselves into their beds with the celerity of frightened mice escaping to their holes.

XII.

"Madame Grandet," said the miser, entering her room, "you must have a secret treasure."

"I am saying my prayers," replied the poor woman, trembling; "wait a moment."

"The devil take your prayers," grumbled the affectionate husband.

Misers do not believe in a life hereafter. To them, the present is everything. This reflection throws an ominous light on our own age—in which, more than in any previous time, money controls laws, politics and manners. Institutions, books, men and doctrines all conspire to undermine our belief in a future life, on which the social edifice has rested for eighteen hundred years. The coffin, now, is a transition but little dreaded. The future that awaits us beyond the requiem, has been transported to the present. To arrive *per fas* and *ne fas* at the terrestrial paradise of luxury and ostentatious pleasure, to petrify the heart and macerate the body, in view of fleeting possessions—as the martyrdom of life was formerly suffered in view of eternal treasure—is now the governing principle; a principle engraven everywhere, even on the statutes that asks a man: "What do you pay?" instead of "What do you think?" When this doctrine shall have descended to the body of the people, what will become of the country?

"Have you finished, Madame Grandet?" said the miser.

"I am praying for you, husband," was her answer.

"Very well; good-night! We will talk to-morrow."

The poor woman prepared for sleep like a scholar, who, not having learned his lesson well, dreads lest the irritated look of his teacher should peer into his face when he awakes. While she was arranging the bed-clothes tightly about her, so that she could hear nothing more, Eugenie glided softly to her side and kissed her forehead.

"Dear, kind mother," said she, "to-morrow I will tell him that it was I."

"No, no," said Madame Grandet. "He will send you to Noyers if you do; leave it all to me. He cannot eat me."

"Hark, mamma! do you hear?"

"What?"

"He is weeping yet!"

"Go to bed, my daughter; the floor is damp and you will take cold."

Thus ended the day that was to influence the whole after life of the rich (and yet poor) heiress, whose slumbers were never again to be as calm and happy as they had hitherto been.

It frequently happens that the actions of real life appear improbable, despite their actual truth. But is not this because we usually omit to shed over our spontaneous determinations a sort of psychological light, leaving unexplained the mysteriously conceived notions that necessitated them? The probability of Eugenie's sudden yet deep-rooted passion, that in a moment, as it were, became a malady controlling her destiny, may by some be questioned. Many persons will deny a conclusion rather than be at the pains to measure the strength of certain invisible ties and sentiments that unite one fact to another in the moral system. But here the past life of Eugenie will serve, to the observers of human nature, as a warrant for the ingenuousness of her conduct, for her want of reflection, and for the involuntary outpourings of her soul.

Agitated by the events of the day, she awoke several times during the night to listen to her cousin, thinking she heard his groans, which found an echo in her own heart. Sometimes she dreamed she saw him dying with grief; at other times, expiring from hunger.

Toward the dawn of the ensuing day, she heard a fearful exclamation. She started up, dressed herself hastily, and ran to Charles's room, the door of which was open. The bougie had burned to the socket of the candlestick. Charles, overpowered at last, had fallen asleep, still dressed, and seated in a chair, with his head resting on the bed. He was dreaming as people dream who have fasted long. Eugenie wept at the sight, and her cousin, sympathetically divining her presence, opened his eyes and beheld her weeping.

"Excuse me, cousin!" said he, vaguely, evidently unconscious of the hour of the day and the place where he was.

"Cousin," said Eugenie, affectionately, "there are hearts in this house that sympathize with your sorrow, and we were fearful you might want something. You ought to go to your bed, for you only fatigue yourself by remaining in this way."

"I believe you are very right," replied Charles, hardly knowing what he said.

"Well, then, good-by!" said Eugenie, and she made her escape, both ashamed and happy that she had gone thither. Innocence, alone, can undertake such tasks. Virtue itself, when instructed, calculates as circumspectly as vice; and Eugenie, courageous in presence of her cousin, could scarcely stand when she reached her own chamber.

Her life of ignorance had suddenly ceased. She reasoned, and reproached herself.

"What will he think of me?" she said. "He will believe that I love him."

Now, this was precisely what she most wished him to believe; for true love has its prescience, too, and knows that fondness begets fondness.

What an incident—for this young, secluded girl, thus stealthily to have entered a young man's room. Are there not thoughts and actions which, in love, are equivalent with some hearts to a holy betrothal?

An hour after this, Eugenie went, according to her custom, to assist her mother to dress. After which they descended to the parlor and took their usual places at the window, waiting for Monsieur Grandet to make his appearance, with that anxiety and solicitude that freezes or scorches the heart—according to our temperaments—when we dread a *scene*, or a punishment. This is a sentiment common to the whole animal creation; for a brute will cry for, or shrink from, correction, while it will be mute and passive if it hurt itself inadvertently.

Grandet entered the room, spoke to his wife as usual, kissed Eugenie, and sat

down to the table without appearing to remember the incidents of the previous evening.

"Where's my nephew?" said he; "he is not much in the way, after all."

"He is asleep, sir," said Nanon.

"So much the better," said Grandet, in a jocose tone, "he has no need of a bougie."

This unusual clemency, this bitter gayety, struck Madame Grandet, and she looked very attentively at her husband. But he, after some indifferent remarks, took his hat and gloves, saying:

"I am going to walk about the square to meet the Cruchots, *accidentally*."

"Eugenie," said her mother, after the old man was gone, "your father certainly has something on his mind."

XIII.

The miser was a light sleeper, and he employed half his nights in those preparatory calculations which gave to his views, observations, and plans, their surprising accuracy, and assured to them that constant success which amazed the people of Saumur. All human power is made up of time and patience; men of influence watch and wait. The life of a miser is a persevering exercise of human power put to personal service; it relies on two passions only, interest and self-love; and interest being in some sort self-love, substantial and well-directed—the continual attestation of a tangible, real superiority—these two are but parts of the same whole egotism, selfishness. This, perhaps, is the reason of the interest concentrated in the character of a miser when it is well represented on the stage; every spectator has a touch of sympathy for these personages; they reflect on the whole of human sentiment, because in themselves they comprise the whole. Where is a man without desire? and what desire can he indulge without money?

Old Grandet certainly had *something*, as his wife said, on his mind. There dwelt in his very constitution, as in that of all misers, a constant necessity to play a part with other men, and in a lawful way to make money out of them. To gain an advantage over others—is not this to exercise power? to give one's self perpetually the right of despising those who, too feeble to resist, suffer themselves to be immolated? Oh! who has thoroughly understood the meaning of the lamb lying peacefully at the footstool of God, the most touching symbol of all terrestrial victims—significant of their future destiny, glorified Suffering and Weakness! This lamb the miser suffers to fatten; he folds, butchers, cooks, eats, and despises it. The food of misers is money and disdain.

The ideas of old Grandet had, during the night, taken a new direction; hence his clemency.

He had devised a plan to triumph over the Parisians; to squeeze, to roll, to knead them; to make them come, go, sweat, hope, blench, and suffer for his amusement; *his* amusement—his, the old cooper's, while he was seated in his gray parlor, or ascending the worm-eaten staircase of his house in Saumur.

His nephew *had* occupied his attention; and he determined to save the honor of his deceased brother, without a penny of expense to himself or to Charles. His funds were to be invested for three years; and he had nothing to take his own attention but the superintendence of his lands. He, therefore, needed some aliment for his malicious activity, and his brother's bankruptcy furnished it. Feeling nothing in his claws to wring or squeeze, he determined to bray the Parisians in a mortar for Charles's profit, and show himself an excellent brother at a cheap rate.

However, the honor of the family entered so little into his estimates, that his good-will there might be compared to the gamester's necessity of seeing a hand well played, even though he has nothing at stake upon it.

The Cruchots were necessary to his present purpose; but he would not seek them; he would make them come to him;

and that very evening he would begin the drama, the plot of which he had now completed, so as, on the morrow, to command the admiration of his fellow-citizens.

In her father's absence, Eugenie had the happiness of being able to occupy herself openly for her beloved cousin, and fearlessly to bestow on him the treasures of her pity—woman's sublimest passion; the only one in which she cares to assume a superiority over man, and the only instance in which she will pardon man for submitting to her assumption.

Eugenie went several times to ascertain if Charles were awake; and as soon as she discovered that he had risen, the cream, the coffee, the eggs, the fruit, the glass, the plates—everything that was accessory to his breakfast, became an object of her care. When all was done, she again flew upstairs to listen. Was he dressing? Was he weeping still? She ventured as far as the door.

"Cousin Charles!"

"Yes! eh—is it you, Eugenie?"

"Will you breakfast in the parlor, or in your own room?"

"Wherever you please."

"How are you this morning?"

"My dear cousin, I am ashamed to say I am hungry."

This brief conversation, through a closed door, was to Eugenie what an episode in a novel is to its readers.

"Well, we'll bring your breakfast here, so as not to vex papa," said she, descending to the kitchen with the swiftness of a bird.

"Nanon, go up and arrange his room."

The staircase, so often ascended and descended, and that creaked and echoed with the slightest noise, lost to Eugenie its age and dilapidated character; it was luminous; it spoke; it was young, like herself; young as the love to which it ministered. Her mother, too, her good and indulgent mother, willingly lent herself to the whims of her daughter's affection; and as soon as Charles's room was in order, they both went thither to bear him company.

Does not Christian charity enjoin us to render consolation to the afflicted?

These two women drew from religion a goodly number of little sophisms to justify their conduct.

Charles Grandet, therefore, beheld himself the object of their most affectionate and tender solicitude; and the sweetness of their gentle friendship, the exquisite sympathy that these two restrained hearts now freely displayed on feeling themselves disenthralled for a moment in the region of sorrow (their natural sphere), was fervently appreciated by him in this his hour of affliction.

Eugenie, under authority of relationship, changed the napkin on Charles's dressing-table, and arranged the knick-knacks of his toilet. She could now admire at her leisure the luxurious baubles, the trifles wrought in gold and silver, which the young gentleman brought with him from Paris.

Charles was greatly moved by the generous and deep interest that his aunt and cousin testified in his behalf—for he was too well acquainted with Paris society not to know that in his present destitute condition he would *there* have found nothing but cold looks and indifferent regard. Eugenie stood before his appreciating sight in all the glow of her peculiar beauty, and he now admired the simplicity of manners which he had so lately derided. When Eugenie presented him the china cup full of coffee and cream, his eyes filled with tears, and he took her hand and kissed it.

"What is the matter now?" said she.

"These, my dear cousin," said Charles, warmly, "are tears of gratitude."

Eugenie turned abruptly toward the mantel-piece, took the candlestick, and said, "Here, Nanon, carry this downstairs." Then, after bustling about the fire-place a few moments, she turned again to the table; her cheeks were still tingling with a blush that she could not repress, but she had by this time composed her features, which an instant before would have betrayed the tumultuous joy that yet throbbed in her heart. Nevertheless, the eyes of the cousins,

when they met, expressed one emotion as their bosoms participated one sentiment: the future was *theirs*, and this thought was the more delightful to Charles in the midst of his grief from being so wholly unanticipated.

A knock at the street door recalled Eugenie and her mother to the prosaic realities of life, and they had just time to resume their occupations in the parlor, before old Grandet entered; if he had met them before they regained their seats, his suspicions would have been excited.

After the mid-day meal was dispatched, the farmer arrived from Froidfond, bringing a hare and some partridges killed in the park, and two pike and some eels due from the miller.

"Here comes poor Cornoiller, like fish in Lent," said Grandet. "Are these fit to eat?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied the man; "they have been killed but two days."

"Here, Nanon," cried Grandet, "stir yourself; take these and prepare them for dinner; I expect the two Cruchots."

Nanon opened her eyes in amazement.

"And pray, sir," said she, "where shall I find lard and spices?"

"Wife," said Grandet, "lend Nanon six francs, and put me in mind to go to the cellar for the best wine." And he went out with the farmer.

The poor woman was happy to purchase peace for six francs, and she knew that Grandet always kept quiet for a fortnight after having filched some of her money.

"Madame," said Nanon, who had put on her hood and taken her basket, "I shall not want more than three francs."

"Give us a good dinner, Nanon," said Eugenie.

"Something extraordinary is about to happen!" said Madame Grandet. "Never but twice before since our marriage, has your father had company to dinner."

XIV.

About four o'clock, just as Eugenie and her mother had finished arranging the table for six persons, and the master of the house had brought from his cellar a few bottles of those exquisite wines that the provincials always keep in reserve, Charles entered the parlor. He was quite pale, and his gestures, countenance, looks, and tones were pervaded with a sadness that was full of grace. He did not counterfeit grief; he truly suffered it; and the veil that sorrow threw over his features gave him that interesting air so taking with women. Eugenie was touched by it; perhaps, also, she felt that misfortune had brought him nearer to her. Charles was no longer the rich and elegant young man placed in a sphere that she could not approach; but a relation in misery, and misery brings equality. Women have this in common with the angels; suffering creatures belong to them. The cousins understood and conversed with each other through the medium of their eyes—for the fallen dandy, the poor orphan, placed himself in a corner, where he sat, mute, calm, haughty; but every now and then the mild and caressing look of his cousin shone upon him, and constrained him to abandon his gloomy thoughts and bound with her into the fields of hope.

The good people of Saumur were to-day more astonished at the invitation to dinner given to the Cruchots by old Grandet, than they had been on the preceding day at his sale of wine. If the politic cooper had given the invitation in the same conceit as that which cost Alcibiades' dog his tail, he would have been a great man; but he despised his fellow townsmen too heartily to bestow a thought on their opinions.

The Des Grassins having learned of the violent death and probable failure of Charles's father, resolved to go that evening to Monsieur Grandet's to proffer their condolence, and, while giving this proof of friendly regard, to learn the old man's object in inviting the Cruchots to dinner.

At five o'clock, precisely, the president and his uncle, the notary, arrived in their Sunday attire, sat down to dinner and began to eat famously. Old Grandet was grave; Charles, silent; Eugenie, dumb;

and Madame Grandet talked neither more nor less than usual; so the dinner was a genuine meal of condolence.

When the company arose from the table, Charles begged permission to retire, as he had a long and sad correspondence to occupy him.

After he was gone, old Grandet said to his wife:

"Madame Grandet, what we are going to say will be Latin to you; and, as it is half-past seven, you had better shut yourself up in your pocketbook. Good-night, my daughter," he added, kissing her; and both ladies left the room.

Being now left alone with his guests, old Grandet began one of those conversations in which he best subserved his own views by stammering. And this time the stammer, affected for so long a period that it passed in Saumur for a natural infirmity (as did also the deafness which the miser complained of in wet weather), became so fatiguing to the Cruchots that they replied to it by sundry involuntary yawns and grimaces. Perhaps the history of this deafness and stammering will not here be out of place.

No one in Anjou understood better, or pronounced more distinctly, the Angevine-French than old Grandet. Despite all his cunning, however, he had in former days been *taken in* by an Israelite, who, during their negotiation, frequently applied his hand to his ear to catch Grandet's words; and also stammered so cleverly in repeating his own words that Grandet—yielding to the suggestions of a now obsolete quality, his humanity—felt compelled to help out the roguish Jew by suggesting words and ideas that the Jew wanted, and thus himself conclude the Jew's own arguments; to speak, in short, as the d—d Jew desired to speak, and thus unconsciously to become, in the discussion, not his own but the Jew's advocate. The result was, that Grandet came off vanquished, for the first and only time in his commercial life. But what he lost in money he gained in experience; he had learned a lesson by which he profited ever after; and the old man ended by blessing the Jew who, although he cheated him, had also taught him the art of tiring the patience of those with whom he was bargaining; and by constantly occupying them with expressing his ideas, to make them forget their own.

"Monsieur B-b-b-b-onfons—" began the old man, giving the gentleman his title, which he had done but once before in three years, and thus encouraging the suitor to hope that he might become his son-in-law—"you s-s-s-say that f-f-f-failures m-m-m-may in certain cases be h-h-h-hindered b-b-b-by—"

"By the *Tribunal de Commerce;* this is an everyday occurrence," said Monsieur C. de Bonfons, bestriding Father Grandet's idea, or believing he had guessed it; and willing to oblige him by explaining it, he added, "listen."

"I listen," replied the old man, meekly, assuming the mischievous look of a child who laughs in his sleeve at his teacher while appearing to bestow the greatest attention.

"When a noted and respected man," pursued the president, "such, for instance, as was your late brother, becomes embarrassed, and his failure is unavoidable, the *Tribunal de Commerce* has power, by a decree, to appoint liquidators for his affairs. Now, to thus go into liquidation, is not to fail; in becoming a bankrupt, a man is dishonored; but in liquidating, he remains an honest man. Then again, a liquidation may be effected without the aid of the Tribunal; for how is a bankruptcy declared? First, by a deposit of the ledger at the Registry of the Tribunal by the merchant himself, or his lawful attorney; or, secondly, on the petition of his creditors. Now, if the merchant does not thus deposit his ledger, and if no creditor asks a decree from the Tribunal to declare the said merchant a bankrupt, what follows? Why, the family of the deceased, his representatives, his heirs—nay, the merchant himself, if living, or his friends, if he has absconded—may liquidate. Perhaps now, Monsieur Grandet, you wish to liquidate the affairs of your brother?"

"Ah, Grandet!" cried the notary, "that would be glorious. There is honor

in the provinces. If you would thus save your name—for it *is* your name — you would be—"

"A nobleman!" interrupted the president.

"Certainly," said the miser, "my b-b-b-brother was n-n-n-named Grandet, like myself; that's s-s-s-sure and certain. I c-c-c-can't gainsay that. And this l-l-l-liquidation w-w-w-would at all events and in all respects be very adv-v-v-vantageous to the int-t-t-terests of my nephew, whom I l-l-love. But I must see. I do not kn-n-n-now *the rogues* of Paris. I am of Saumur. I have my pl-l-l-antings, my t-t-t-trenches; in short, I have my own aff-f-f-airs. I nev-v-v-er gave a n-n-note; I h-h-have received a g-g-g-great many, but I n-n-n-never gave one. I h-h-h-have heard that notes can be b-b-b-bought in a-a—"

"Yes," said the president, greatly fatigued with listening, and desirous of helping the old man along, "notes can be bought on 'change for so much per cent discount; do you understand?"

Here Grandet applied his hand to his ear, and the president repeated his words.

"But," said the miser, "I kn-n-n-ow nothing at my t-t-t-time of life about s-s-such things. I must stay here to watch my grain. Grain is g-g-good for somet-th-th-thing, and can be t-t-turned into money. I cannot leave home for the *em-em-embrrrrououillllamini gentes* of all the d-d-d-devils that I don't under-der-der-stand at all. You say that to liquidate, to arrest a declaration of bank-k-k-ruptcy, I must g-g-g-go to Paris. I can-n-n-not be in two pl-l-l-aces at once, unless I t-t-t-turn into a bird."

"Ah," exclaimed the notary, "I understand you now. My dear sir! you have friends, attached friends, who are willing to serve you."

"Umph!" thought the miser; "let them settle that point!"

"And," continued the notary, "if some one should go to Paris in your stead, and find out your brother William's largest creditor, and say to him—"

"St-t-t-t-top a minute!" cried the old man; "some-th-th-thing like this, I suppose: M. Grandet of Saumur here; M. Grandet of Saumur there. M. Grandet is a ki-ki-ki-kind-hearted relative, and his int-t-t-tentions are good. He has s-s-sold his vintage well. Don't de-c-c-clare the bankruptcy! b-b-but c-c-c-call a meeting of creditors, and name li-li-liquidators. Th-th-then M. Grandet will see ab-b-b-bout it. It w-w-would be b-b-b-better for you to liquidate than to l-l-let the lawyers st-t-t-tick their noises into the thing. Isn't it so?"

"Precisely so," said the president.

"Because you see, Monsieur de Bon-f-f-f-fons, we must see bef-f-fore we decide. What c-c-can't be done c-c-can't be done. In all imp-p-p-p-portant affairs, if we d-d-d-don't want to ruin our-s-s-selves, we must c-c-count the cost."

"Of course," said the president. "My opinion is, that after a little time, the debts can be bought up for a trifle, a mere song. Ha! ha! ha! you can lead dogs a great way by showing them a bone. If there has been no declaration of failure, and you hold the debts yourself, you become as pure as snow."

"Sn-n-now!" said the old man, putting his hand to his ear; "I don't understand the sn-n-n-ow!"

"Listen, then," cried the president. "A note is an article of merchandise that may have its rise and fall; this is a deduction from the maxims of Jeremy Bentham on usury. He has demonstrated that the antiquated prejudice against usurers is gross injustice. Seeing, then, that in principle, and, according to Bentham, money is merchandise, that which represents money is also merchandise; and since mercantile notes, like other commodities, are scarce or abundant, steady or fluctuating, the Tribunal orders—pshaw! what a fool I am!—in short, I am of the opinion that you may buy up your brother's debts at twenty-five per cent."

"You spoke," said the miser, "of one Jere-e-e-my B-b-b—"

"Bentham, an Englishman," said the president.

"That sort of a Jeremy would help us to avoid a great many 'lamentations'

M. GRANDET.

in business matters!" said the notary, facetiously.

"These Englishmen," said old Grandet, "h-h-ave sometimes a g-g-great deal of g-g-g-good sense. Then, ac-c-cording to B-b-b-enthan, if the debts of my brother are w-w-w-worth—are n-n-n-not worth—yes, th-th-th-that's right—isn't it?—the creditors w-w-will be—that is they w-w-will not be—"

"Let me explain this to you, my dear sir," said the president. "In law, if you hold all the evidences of debt against the house of Grandet in Paris, your brother or his heirs will owe nothing beyond the debt to you; and, in order to obtain possession of these claims—if they are disposed of on 'change, and one of your friends shall there have bought them in at a great or less discount, the creditors not having been coerced to part with them, can never thereafter, either in law or equity, establish a claim against the estate of the late Monsieur Grandet."

"Ah, that's true," said the miser, "business is b-b-business; but, you undd-derstand there are dif-f-ficulties in the way. I have n-n-n-neither m-m-money nor time—"

"I see, I see!" said the president, "you cannot go to Paris conveniently. Well; I propose to go to Paris myself (you paying my traveling expenses, which will be but a trifle), and I will see the creditors; I will talk, negotiate, compound; in short, I will get possession of the debts according to law."

"B-b-but," said Grandet, "we will s-s-see about that, I c-c-c-cannot, I w-w-w-will not engage w-w-w-without—what c-c-c-can't be done; y-y-y-you understand?"

"Very true," said the president.

"My head," continued Grandet, "is spl-l-litting with what y-y-you have b-b-been b-b-attering into it. I have never before th-th-thought of these things."

"You are no lawyer, that's certain," said the president, complacently.

"No," answered Grandet, submissively, "I'm only a p-p-p-poor vinter, and know n-n-nothing about what you've b-b-b-been saying. I must study it out."

"Well, then," replied the president, taking an attitude.

But just here a knock at the door announced the arrival of the Des Grassins; an event that the notary much rejoiced at, for he began to dislike the turn things were taking, and was quite dissatisfied at the notion of the president's going to Paris, there to stipulate with another man's creditors, and lend himself to practices which, however legal, did not come within his rules of probity. Besides, although he had listened attentively to the conversation, he had not yet heard the miser make the slightest promise to pay any money for any purpose connected with the expedition, and he instinctively trembled at seeing his nephew meddle with the business wherein he might readily compromise himself. He profited, therefore, by the entrance of the Des Grassins to take his nephew by the arm, and lead him to the recess of a window.

"You have now," said he, "sufficiently shown your good-will; let the matter rest here. Your desire of obtaining the hand of this girl blinds you. Don't go so rashly to work. Leave me to steer the boat, and do you only pull an oar when you must. Is it for you to compromise the dignity of a magistrate by a—"

He did not finish his sentence, for he now heard Monsieur des Grassins say to the miser:

"Grandet, we have learned the dreadful disaster that has taken place in your family, the embarrassment of the house of Grandet in Paris, and your brother's death. We have come to express to you our sorrow, and to offer our condolence."

"No other disaster has happened," said the notary to the banker, "than the death of the younger Monsieur Grandet; and he need not have killed himself, if he had but thought of calling on his brother for assistance. Our old friend here, who is honor to his very fingers' ends, intends to liquidate the affairs of the Paris house, and my nephew, in order to relieve him from the care and anxiety of an affair purely judicial, has offered to start at once for Paris, and hold an interview with the creditors."

These words, confirmed by the manner of the old cooper, who was stroking his chin in silence, perfectly astounded the three Des Grassins, who, during their walk, had anathematized Grandet's avarice, and laid his brother's death at his door.

"I knew how it would be?" exclaimed the banker, looking at his wife; "what did I tell you on our way hither, madame? Didn't I say that Monsieur Grandet was an honorable man from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and would never suffer his name to receive the slightest blemish? Money without honor is a canker. You are doing a noble deed, Grandet! I'm an old soldier, and always speak my mind. I say it's a noble deed!"

"B-b-b-but, my good sir," replied Grandet, "the n-n-n-noble is very d-d-dear, very exp-p-pensive!"

Des Grassins shook the miser warmly by the hand, saying:

"One thing is to be considered. I mean no offense to the president, but this is a purely commercial affair, and requires the aid of a practical man. The person who negotiates the matter must be familiar with quittances, interest, disbursements, investments, etc., etc. Now, I am on the point of going to Paris on some business of my own, and can easily take charge of—"

"W-w-w-we will, then," said the miser, "end-d-d-d-deavor to arrange with *you* in relation to po-p-possibilities, and without en-eng-g-aging myself to d-d-do what I c-c-cannot perform; for the president would naturally exp-p-pect me to defray his exp-p-penses."

"Why," interrupted Madame des Grassins, "it is a recreation to go to Paris; and, for my part, I would willingly pay to go, instead of asking to be paid." And she gave a look and a wink to her husband, intimating that he had a rare opportunity to take this matter out of his rival's hands.

Old Grandet took the banker by the button, and led him aside.

"I should have much more confidence in you than in the president," said he, stammering no longer. "Besides," he added, with an emphatic move of his wen, "there is in my plan a wheel within a wheel. I want to invest a few thousand francs in the *rentes*, at not over 80. I am told the price will decline during the rest of the month; but you know all about it, I presume?"

"I think I do!" said the banker, complacently. "Well, then, I shall have to raise some money for you?"

"No," said Grandet, "not much to begin with; but—not a word of this to anybody else. I want to manage it privately. You will buy for me, deliverable at the end of the month; but don't say a word to the Cruchots. And, since you are going to Paris, we will think a little about my poor nephew's affairs."

"It is decided, then," said Des Grassins, aloud, and in a tone of triumph, "that I start to-morrow, post; and I will come for your latest instructions at —what hour?"

"At five o'clock; before dinner," replied Grandet.

"Ah," said Des Grassins, slapping Grandet familiarly on the shoulder, "it is a fine thing to have such good relations!"

"Yes," said Grandet, "I *am* a good relation, though I say it. I loved my brother, and I will prove that I did, if it does not cost—"

"We will take our leave," said the banker, interrupting the miser just where he wished to be interrupted; and as the hostile families withdrew, the face of the president assumed an expression of judicial melancholy, like that of a magistrate wearied with a long argument.

"Will you go with us to Madame d'Orsonval's?" said Monsieur des Grassins, as they walked moodily along the street.

"We will meet you there by and by, with my uncle's permission," replied the president. "I have promised to call on Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt in the first place."

"*Au revoir*, then, gentlemen," said Madame des Grassins.

XV.

When the parties were separated, Adolphe said to his father:

"They are pretty well routed this time!"

"Be quiet, my son," said his mother; "they may chance to hear you." And they walked on.

"Uncle," said the president, as they pursued their own way, "my prospects are eclipsed."

"Don't disturb yourself!" replied the notary, with an accompanying chuckle; "let our friends, the Des Grassins, involve themselves in this business, with the '*we'll see*' of old Grandet to back them, and *we'll see* what will come of it. You have not lost Eugenie yet."

The news of Grandet's intentions toward his brother's estate flew like wild-fire through Saumur, and the fickle disposition of Frenchmen—who, with equal facility and on the same pretext, fly into a rage or rapture, just as it happens—was now developed in praises of a man who had since the sale of his wines been their execration.

When Grandet had closed the door on his guests, he called Nanon.

"Don't unchain the dog," he said, "nor go to bed. We have something to do by ourselves. At eleven o'clock Cornoiller will be at the door with the chaise from Froidfond. Listen when he comes, so that he need not knock, and tell him to come in very softly."

The old man then ascended to his laboratory, where Nanon heard him moving about, rummaging, going to and fro, but with great precaution. He evidently did not wish to awaken his wife or daughter, and was especially anxious not to excite the curiosity of his nephew, on whom he vented not a few imprecations when he perceived that a light was still burning in his room.

In the middle of the night Eugenie thought she heard a groan, and she was so preoccupied with her cousin that she concluded it came from his room. She remembered how pale he was when he retired, and feared he might have killed himself in a fit of despair. In an instant, she wrapped herself in a cloak, and was about to issue from her chamber, when a vivid light shining in through the cracks of her door made her for an instant think the house was on fire. But she was soon reassured on this point by hearing Nanon's heavy tread and voice mingled with the neighing of horses.

"Is my father going to carry Charles away?" thought she, at the same time opening the door cautiously so as not to make a noise, yet so as to enable her to see what was taking place in the hall.

Suddenly she caught a sight of her father's face—though she was herself unseen—and his looks chilled her with alarm. He and Nanon were moving carefully along with a keg between them, supported by a rope that was attached to a stout cudgel resting on their shoulders.

"Holy Virgin!" whispered Nanon, "how heavy it is!"

"What a pity it should hold nothing but coppers!" replied the miser; "take care," he added, "that you don't knock over the light." For the candle was stuck between the banisters of the staircase.

"Cornoiller," continued Grandet to the farmer, "did you bring your pistols with you?"

"Not I," replied the man; "what is there to fear for these kegs of coppers?"

"That's true," said Grandet, "they are not worth the trouble."

"Besides," said Cornoiller, "we shall go very swift; the farmers have lent me their best horses."

"But you did not tell them where you were going?" said Grandet, eagerly.

"How could I," replied Cornoiller, "when I don't know myself?"

"Is the chaise strong?" asked the miser.

"Yes, indeed," said the man, "it will carry a ton safely. What do your confounded kegs weigh?"

"Stop," said Nanon, "I'll tell you; let me see; about—"

"Hold your tongue, Nanon!" said Grandet. "Tell Madame Grandet that

I have gone into the country, and shall be back to dinner. Drive fast now, Cornoiller; we must get to Angers before nine o'clock in the morning."

The chaise rolled away; Nanon barred the door, unfastened the dog, and went to bed with a lame shoulder; and not a soul in the neighborhood suspected Monsieur Grandet's departure nor the object of his journey.

The privacy of old Grandet's affairs was complete. No one had ever seen the entrance or the secretion of one of the myriads of golden louis that his house contained. He had learned on that day from some gossiping sailors that the premium on gold had doubled recently at Nantes in consequence of the demand for the navy; and that speculators had gone to Angers to buy it up; this night expedition, therefore, was undertaken by old Grandet to secure the advantage offered by the rise in the market, and bring the principal and premium back in drafts of the receiver general on the national treasury.

After silence was re-established in the house, Eugenie again heard a moan from her cousin's chamber. She flew to the door, stepped through the hall, and saw a line of light as fine as the edge of a sword gleaming through her cousin's door, and intersecting horizontally the banister of the stairs.

"He is certainly in pain," said she, as she mounted the stairs, two steps at a time.

A second moan brought her to the door, which stood ajar, and she pushed it open. Charles was asleep in his chair, his head drooped forward over the side of the chair; his hand, from which the pen had fallen, nearly reached the floor, and the labored respiration consequent on his position, frightened Eugenie as she now entered the room.

"He must be very much fatigued!" thought she, after satisfying herself that he was asleep, and looking at some dozen or more of sealed letters that lay spread out on the table before him, addressed to Mr. John Robert, saddler; M. Buisson, tailor, etc., etc.

"He has no doubt been arranging his affairs so as to be able to leave France!" said she, softly and sadly. At the same moment her eye fell on two open letters, and the words with which one of them commenced, "*My dear Annette,*" made her dizzy, her heart fluttered, and her feet seemed to be riveted to the floor. "His dear Annette! He loves, then, and is beloved! What does he say to her?"

These thoughts shot through her brain, and seemed to be inscribed on the wall in letters of flame.

"Must I give him up so soon?" she thought again. "I will not read the letter. I ought to go away. But, after all, suppose I should read it?"

She looked at her cousin, took hold of his head, and leaned it gently back from its uneasy position, which Charles suffered her to do like a child, who, even while asleep, knows its mother's hand, and receives, without awakening, her cares and caresses. Like a mother Eugenie lifted up his hand and arm, and like a mother imprinted a kiss on a glossy curl of his hair.

Dear Annette!

A demon kept screaming these two words in her ear.

"I know I am doing wrong," said she, "but I will read this letter."

Her noble nature rebelled. She turned away her head; for the first time good and evil were contending together in her heart. Until now, she had never done an act that caused her to blush for herself. But love and curiosity carried the day, and she read as follows:

"My Dear Annette—Nothing could have kept me from you but the misfortune which overwhelms me, and which no human intelligence could foresee. My father has killed himself, and his fortune and mine are entirely lost. I am an orphan at an age when, by the nature of my education, I might still pass for a boy, and yet I must rise a man from the abyss into which I am plunged. I have employed a portion of this night in examining my affairs, and I find that if I would leave France an honest man—which I

certainly shall do—I have not a hundred francs remaining to commence the world with in India.

"My poor Anna! I am going to seek my fortune in a country where the climate will be very likely to kill me. I cannot remain in Paris. I could not endure the coldness, neglect and insult that there await the ruined man—the son of a bankrupt! Good heavens! to owe three millions. No! I cannot return to Paris. Even your affection, the tenderest and most devoted that ever animated the heart of a lover, cannot draw me thither. Alas! my well-beloved, I have not even money enough to carry me where you are, that I might bid you a long farewell."

"Poor Charles!" said Eugenie, wiping her eyes; "I did well to read the letter; I have money, and I will give it to him."

She read on:

"I had not until this moment fully appreciated the woes of poverty. Even if I had the hundred louis required to defray the expenses of my voyage, I should still have nothing left to purchase a venture. But I have neither the hundred louis, nor one louis. I cannot know what is left to me till after the settlement of my debts in Paris. If nothing remains, I shall go quietly to Nantes, and there embark as a common sailor—commencing at the bottom, as many men of energy have commenced, who, young and penniless when they set out, have returned wealthy from India. I have deliberately looked the future in the face, and it seems more terrible for me than for others!—for me, fondled by an idolizing mother, cherished by the best of fathers, and beloved by you, I have as yet culled nothing but the flowers of life; it was a state of too much happiness to last. I have, however, my dear Annette, more courage than usually belongs to thoughtless young men, and that must sustain me.

"I have reflected on my situation, and on yours. I have grown old in these four-and-twenty hours. I see that if, to keep me near you, you were willing to sacrifice your luxuries of life, your toilet, your box at the Opera, all would not be sufficient; nor would I consent to your making the sacrifice. Therefore, we now take leave of each other forever!"

"He leaves her! What joy!" cried Eugenie, starting with rapture. Charles stirred, and she was transfixed with terror; but fortunately for her, he did not awake. She read again

"When shall I return? I know not. The climate of India makes a European prematurely old. Let us look forward ten years. Can you for such a time preserve (as I shall do) at the bottom of your heart the remembrance of our past happiness, and be faithful to your poor friend? I do not, however, exact this from you, because I shall be compelled to conform myself to my situation—to look on life like a working man, and carefully sum up its results. I must therefore think of a marriage, which becomes one of the necessities of my new existence; and I confess to you that I have found here, at Saumur, at my uncle's, a cousin whose manners, face, mind and heart would please you, and who, moreover, seems to have—"

Here the writer had stopped.

"He must have been very much fatigued," said Eugenie, "to have left off writing to her."

And she, Eugenie, forgave him.

XVI.

Was it possible for that innocent young girl to detect the calculating coldness and heartlessness of this hour? To those who, like her, are religiously educated, ignorant and pure, from the time they set foot in the enchanted regions of love, all is love! They walk in the celestial light drawn from their own souls, which irradiates those they love; the objects of their passion are colored with the hues of their own sentiments, and hallowed by their own beautiful thoughts. The errors of

woman almost invariably arise from her belief in virtue, and her confidence in truth. The words, "Dear Annette," "well-beloved" echoed in Eugenie's heart as the most pleasing language of love, and charmed her soul, as, in childhood, the notes of *Venite adoremus,* chanted by the choir, charmed her ear. Besides, the tears for the death of his father, which yet filled Charles's eyes, attested that tenderness of heart so ensnaring to a girl.

Could she know, could she be expected to know, that if Charles loved his father so dearly and mourned his loss so truly, his grief proceeded less from the goodness of his own heart than from the consequences of paternal kindness? William Grandet and his wife, by always indulging the whims of their son, and bestowing on him all the luxuries in their reach, had sown in his heart a true, uncalculating filial love. Nevertheless, Charles was a child of Paris, accustomed by Parisian habits to calculate all things; he was, in effect, an old man under the mask of youth. He had gained the direful education of *the world,* where, in thoughts and words, are committed more crimes in one evening than are punished by Justice in a whole term of the Assizes; where *bon mots* murder the most sublime ideas; where no one is reputed intelligent, but in proportion as he is able to *see clearly.* Now, in Paris, to *see clearly* is to believe nothing; neither in men, sentiments, nor actual events, for there they are counterfeit events. To see clearly, a man must each morning weigh his friend's purse, that he may secure himself against possibilities; he must be constitutionally a stoic; he must make self-interest the mainspring of his actions and life; and though Charles, hitherto, had never been forced to apply the maxims of Parisian morality to his own use, he had so thoroughly imbibed them that it required nothing but the occasion to cause the seed sown to germinate in his heart.

Almost all young girls surrender themselves to the agreeable promise of a handsome exterior. But even had Eugenie been as prudent and observing as are some provincial maidens, could she have distrusted her cousin when, to her apprehension, his manner, words, and actions accorded with the dictates of an upright heart? A chance—for her, a fatal chance—had dried up the last effusions of a true sensibility in Charles's heart, and closed his ears to the last sighs of conscience.

Eugenie turned away from this letter—and complacently regarded her sleeping cousin. For her the fresh illusions of life beamed on that face, and she vowed to herself to love him always.

She then cast her eyes on the other open letter, without considering her right or want of right to do so; and if she began to read, it was with an unconscious intention of acquiring there from fresh proofs of the noble qualities which she, like all other women, bestowed on him whom she had chosen for a lover.

"My dear Alphonse—When you read this letter, you may know that I have lost all my friends; yet I declare to you that while I thus distrust all others who have been accustomed to address that word to me, I do not, nor could I ever, distrust you. I, therefore, place in your hands the arrangement of my affairs, and count on you to dispose, as advantageously as possible, of all I possess. It is indispensable for me to know my exact situation; I have no hopes left in France, and am going to India. I have just finished writing to all the persons, so far as I can recollect, to whom I am indebted, and you will find annexed as exact a list of them as I can make from memory. My library, furniture, carriages, horses, etc., etc., will, I believe, suffice to pay my debts; I wish to reserve from the whole only such trifles, of slight value, as may help to make up a venture. I send you herewith a power of attorney for the sale. Send to me in return, all my weapons, and keep my favorite horse, Briton, for yourself. No one would be willing to give the value of that noble beast, and it is more agreeable to me to present him to you in lieu of the mourning-ring that a dying man ordinarily bequeaths to his

executor. Roberts has made me a very comfortable traveling-carriage, but has not yet delivered it; try to make him keep it without demanding an indemnity; but if he refuses to do this, arrange it so as to satisfy him and clear me from imputation. I owe six louis to the table-keeper at ——; lost at play; fail not to repay this—"

Eugenie read no farther.

"Dear cousin!" she exclaimed, taking up one of the candles, and retreating on tip-toe to her own room.

It was not without a lively emotion of pleasure that she there opened the drawer of an old oaken bureau, one of those beautiful pieces of workmanship of the epoch styled *la rennaissance*, on which was yet visible, though half effaced, the famous royal Salamander. She took thence a large purse of red velvet with gold tassels, and edged with tarnished gold purl, a relic of her grandmother. She weighed the purse proudly in her hand, and then proceeded with alacrity and pleasure to ascertain its exact contents.

She first took out twenty Portuguese pieces, still bright and fresh, coined under John V., in 1725, worth five Lisbonines, or one hundred and sixty-eight and a half francs each by tale; but owing to their rarity and beauty they would pass for one hundred and eighty francs each. *Item*, five Genovines, also rare, worth one hundred francs each to the antiquary. *Item*, three quadruples of Spanish coin, struck off under Philip V., in 1729, worth ninety-eight livres apiece. These had been given her by old Monsieur la Bertelliere and Madame Gentillet. *Item* (and these old Grandet esteemed the most highly, as the gold was twenty-three carats, and a fraction), one hundred ducats of Holland, 1756, worth nearly twelve francs each. *Item* (a great curiosity, and very precious to misers), three rupees, with the sign of the Balance, and five with the sign of the Virgin, all of pure gold, twenty-four carats—the sublime money of the Great Mogul, each worth by weight about thirty-seven and a half francs, and to connoisseurs about fifty francs. *Item*, the Napoleon of forty francs which Eugenie had received on the preceding day.

This treasure consisted altogether of coins unsullied by wear and use, which old Grandet frequently inquired after, and sometimes inspected, in order to point out to his daughter their great value and peculiar beauty. But now she thought not of their rarity, nor of her father's mania, nor of the danger she incurred by impoverishing herself of a possession so dear to the old man; she thought only of her cousin; and, after making sundry errors in estimate, she at length ascertained that the sterling value of her purse was fifty-eight hundred francs, and that it might, by good management, be disposed of for no less than one thousand crowns.

She clapped her hands like a child at this result; and while her father had that night counted his gold to sell it for gain, she had told over hers to cast it into the mighty ocean of love.

Eugenie, without a moment's pause or hesitation, went upstairs again. The poverty and distress of her cousin made her forget the time, place, propriety, everything; besides, she was strong in her conscience and in her devotion. As she put her foot on the threshold of the door, holding the candle in one hand, and the purse in the other, Charles awoke, beheld his cousin, and sat motionless with surprise. Eugenie advanced, placed her candle on the table and said, in a faltering voice:

"I ask your pardon, cousin, for a fault I have committed—but God will forgive the sin if you will pardon my boldness."

"What is it?" said Charles, rubbing his eyes with confusion

"I have read these two letters," answered Eugenie.

Charles colored to his temples.

"How it happened, or why I came up here," continued Eugenie, "I, in truth, no longer remember; but I am tempted not to repent having read them, since they have made me acquainted with your heart, your thoughts, and—"

"And what?" interposed Charles, as she hesitated.

"Your projects," continued Eugenie; "you have need of a sum—"

"My dear cousin!"

"Hush, not so loud! Here are the savings of a poor girl who has no occasion for them. Accept this, Charles. Yesterday, I did not know what money was, but you have taught me. A cousin is almost a brother, and you may very properly borrow from your sister's purse."

Charles remained silent. Eugenie, as much a woman as a girl, had not thought of a refusal.

"Well?" said she.

Charles bent down his head.

"Do you refuse to accept this?" said Eugenie, her heart beating audibly.

His hesitation humiliated her. The indigence into which he was thrown presented itself anew and vividly to her mind; she bent down upon her knee. "I will not arise," she said, "until you have taken this gold! Cousin! Charles! answer me, I beseech you! Let me know that you esteem me, that you are generous, that—"

In listening to this stirring appeal of a noble despair, Charles shed tears on his cousin's hands as he grasped them to prevent her kneeling; she felt them fall like burning drops, and springing up, she caught the purse and emptied it on the table.

"Yes," she said, weeping for joy, "you will! I know you will! Do not despond, Charles! You will be rich yet, for this gold will bring you good luck, and some day you can return it. Take it, and on your own conditions. But you ought not to set so high a value on so paltry a gift."

Charles at last found words.

"My dear Eugenie," he said, "I should be ungenerous and narrow-minded if I refused to accept your kindness. Nevertheless, nothing for nothing; trust for trust."

"How do you mean?" said she in alarm.

"Listen to me, Eugenie," he replied; "I have here"—and he interrupted himself to place on the table a square box, inclosed in a leathern cover—"you see here a thing as precious to me as life; this box is a gift from my mother. Since yesterday morning, I have thought that if she could rise from the grave, she would herself sell the gold that she lavished on this box; but such an act, in me, would be sacrilege."

Eugenie pressed her cousin's hand convulsively at the conclusion of the sentence.

"No," continued Charles, after a slight pause, during which the cousins looked at each other with moistened eyes, "no, I will neither destroy it nor take the risk of losing it on my voyage. Dear Eugenie, you shall be my trustee; and never before did friend commit to friend a charge so sacred. You shall judge if this is true."

He withdrew the box from its case, opened it, and displayed to his astonished cousin a dressing-case in which the articles of gold were tripled in their sterling value by the exquisite workmanship bestowed on them.

"What you now see and so much admire is nothing," said Charles. He then touched a spring, and opened a secret compartment at the bottom of the box. "Here is what, to me, is worth the world," and he drew forth two miniatures, chef-d'œuvres of Madame de Mirbel, richly set with pearls.

"Oh, what a beautiful lady!" exclaimed Eugenie; "is not this the one to whom your letter—"

"No," interrupted Charles, smiling; "this is my mother, and that, my father; your aunt and uncle. Eugenie, I ought to beg you, on my knees, to guard these well for me. The gold will indemnify you if I die and lose your little fortune; and to you alone in the wide world can I, or ought I, to bequeath the miniatures. Destroy them before you die, so that no other hands may touch them."

Eugenie, in turn, was silent.

"Well," continued Charles, "you agree to this, do you not?"

Her reply to these words was a look—the first look of a loving woman; one of

those looks in which there is almost as much coquetry as feeling. Charles took her hand and kissed it.

"Angel of purity!" he exclaimed, "between us, money can never be anything; affection, which has a value, which is really of account, shall henceforth be everything to us; shall it not be so?"

"You resemble your mother," replied Eugenie; "was her voice as soft as yours?"

"Much more soft," said Charles, tenderly.

"It might have been so for you," said Eugenie, casting down her eyes. "But, Charles," she added, changing her tone, "you must go to sleep now, for you are much fatigued. Good-by till to-morrow!" She then gently disengaged her hand from his, and he lighted her down to her room. When they reached her door, Charles exclaimed:

"Ah, why am I a ruined man?"

"Pooh!" said Eugenie, "my father must be rich."

"Poor child!" replied Charles, "if so, he would not have suffered my father to die; he would not leave you in this destitution; he would live differently."

"But he owns Froidfond."

"What is Froidfond worth?"

"I don't know; but he owns Noyers."

"Some miserable farm, I suppose."

"And vineyards, and meadows, and—"

"All nothing," interrupted Charles, with a disdainful air. "If your father had even twenty-four thousand francs of income, do you think he would occupy such a house as this?"

"Never mind," said Eugenie, "good-night, now."

Charles returned the adieu, and they parted with a smile that spoke of love and hope and the future; and from that hour Charles's grief grew lighter.

XVII.

THE next morning, Madame Grandet met her daughter preparing to walk with Charles before breakfast.

"Papa will not return till dinner-time," said Eugenie to her, seeing the uneasiness on her mother's countenance; and the mother readily understood why the daughter was taking this walk. It was easy to perceive in Eugenie's manner, in her face, and in the newly modulated tone of her voice, a conformity of thought between her and her cousin. Their souls seemed to have espoused each other, even before having proved the strength of the sentiment that bound them together.

The day passed along with a bustle; for as old Grandet departed without notice to any one, a great number of people called during the morning to see him; the tiler, the plumber, the mason, the trench diggers, the carpenter, the vine-dressers, the farmers; some to conclude a bargain for repairs, others to pay rent, etc., etc., so that Madame Grandet and Eugenie had to go and come, and answer innumerable questions.

Toward five o'clock in the afternoon, old Grandet returned from Angers, bringing with him the value of his gold—including more than twenty thousand francs for premium—in orders on the public treasury which bore interest from their date. He left Cornoiller at Angers, to take charge of the almost foundered horses, and drive them slowly home.

"Wife," said he, "I have just got back from Angers, and I am hungry."

"Haven't you eaten anything since yesterday?" cried Nanon, from the kitchen.

"Nothing," answered the miser.

Nanon brought in the soup, and just as the family were sitting down to dinner, Monsieur des Grassins came for his final instructions. Meantime, the miser, fully occupied with his own affairs, had not even observed that Charles was in the room.

"Don't disturb yourself, Grandet," said the banker; "go on with your dinner, and we'll talk at the same time. Have you heard what gold is worth at Angers? I mean to send some there."

"You had better not send it," said Grandet, quietly; "the demand has been supplied, and you are too old a friend for me to suffer you to make a loss."

"But gold is worth there 13*f.* 50*c.*," said the banker.

"Say *was* worth that," replied the miser.

"Why, where the devil could they have got a supply?" asked Des Grassins.

"I went there last night," answered the old man, in a low tone.

The banker started with surprise, and immediately a whispered conversation ensued between him and old Grandet. When the latter directed Des Grassins to buy for him two hundred thousand livres of *rentes*, another gesture of astonishment escaped the banker; who, soon after, turning to Charles, said:

"Monsieur Grandet, I am going to Paris, and will take charge of any commission for you."

"I thank you, sir," replied Charles; "I have nothing whatever to trouble you with?"

"Thank him better than that, nephew," said the miser; "he is going expressly to settle the affairs of the house of William Grandet."

"How!" exclaimed Charles; "is there any hope in that quarter?"

"Hope, indeed!" cried the miser, with a well counterfeited pride; "are you not my nephew? Your honor is mine. Is not your name Grandet?"

Such words, from such a source, at such a time, may well be supposed to have been astounding to Charles. He arose, seized his uncle's hand, which he wrung convulsively, turned pale, and precipitately left the room. Eugenie, for her part, gazed at her father in silent admiration.

"Good-by, good-by, Des Grassins," said old Grandet; "I wish you all possible success. Mystify those people well for me."

The two diplomatists shook hands, and the cooper accompanied the banker to the door. When the former returned to the parlor, he threw himself into an armchair and told Nanon to give him some cordial. But he was too much agitated to remain long in one position, and he arose, looked at the portrait of Monsieur la Bertilliere, and began to hum a tune, taking at the same time what Nanon called a dancing-step, and singing:

> "In the Guards of France
> I had a good papa—"

Nanon, Madame Grandet, and Eugenie looked at each other in silence; the miser's joy always alarmed them when it reached its apogee.

The evening soon wore away, for the old man wanted to go to bed early; and, when he retired, his household were to do the same—as, when Augustus drank, all Poland was intoxicated. Nevertheless, during the evening, short as it was, the miser being in a more facetious mood than ever before, indulged in many apothegms peculiar to himself, of which one may serve as an example. When he had swallowed the cordial, he looked at the glass, saying:

"We no sooner put our lips to the glass, than it is empty. This is our history. We cannot be and have been. Crown pieces cannot circulate and remain in your purse; otherwise, life would be too joyous."

He was very jovial and very forbearing. When Nanon came in with her wheel, he said:

"You must be tired; let your flax alone to-night."

"Why then," replied Nanon, "I shall not know what to do with myself."

"Poor Nanon!" said Grandet, "will you take some cordial?"

"I won't say no to that," said the gratified servant, "for mistress makes it better than the apothecaries."

"Yes," said Grandet; "they put in so much sugar that they spoil it."

The next morning, when the family assembled at breakfast, a general intimacy seemed for the first time to prevail among its members. A community of trouble caused the three women to sympathize with Charles, and therefore brought them into a close relation; while the old man, gratified with his recent success, and being mindful that his nephew was really out of his way without putting him to serious charge, was really complacent toward him. After breakfast,

he left the two children—so he styled Charles and Eugenie — to do as they pleased, under the eye of Madame Grandet, in whose direction as to manners and morals he had implicit confidence.

And now commenced for Eugenie the springtime of love; for, during her nocturnal interview with her cousin, when she gave him her purse, her heart followed it. "Does not relationship," thought she, "authorize a certain softness in the tone, a certain tenderness in the smile?" and she delighted to soothe her cousin's sorrow by her infantine expressions of a growing love.

XVIII.

Are there not pleasant similarities between the commencement of love and the commencement of life? Do we not soothe the child by gentle songs and kindly looks? and tell him marvelous tales that gild the future? Does not hope unfold for him continually her radiant wings? and does he not shed, alternately, tears of joy and sorrow? Does he not weep for a pebble? or a card, with which he essays to build a fragile palace? for flowers, forgotten as soon as plucked? Is he not eager to anticipate time, and press forward in life faster than life's rapid wheels are whirling him along? Love is our second transformation. But childhood and love were one with Eugenie; this was her first passion in all its childishness, and the more delicious to her from its being shrouded in sadness.

In exchanging a word or two with Eugenie, by the side of the well; in sitting by her side on a mossy bank in the circumscribed garden until sunset, saying a thousand nothings, or meditating in the stillness that reigned between the rampart and the house, a stillness like that which pervades the arches of a church, Charles comprehended the holiness of love; Annette had taught him only its stormy turbulence. From this moment he abandoned his Parisian, vain, coquettish passion, for a pure and genuine attachment; and ere three days had elapsed, he loved this old, desolate house, and everything appertaining to it.

Of a morning he left his room as soon as the day dawned, to gain a few moments with Eugenie, before old Grandet made his appearance, and when the miser's step resounded on the stairs, Charles would make his escape to the garden. The slight criminality of this matinal rendezvous, unknown even to Madame Grandet, and which Nanon pretended not to observe, gave to a love the most innocent the zest that accompanies clandestine enjoyments. After breakfast, when old Grandet was out inspecting his lands and improvements, Charles would remain beside the mother and daughter, and experience a pleasure he never knew before, in untangling a skein, and seeing them sew, and hearing them talk. The simplicity of this almost monastic life, that revealed to him the loveliness of mind to which the world was unknown, powerfully impressed him; he had not suspected the existence of such manners in France; and soon, in his eyes, Eugenie became the ideal type of Goethe's Marguerita, without her fault.

Three days after Monsieur des Grassins' departure, Charles was conducted by his uncle to the *Tribunal de premiere instance*, with all the solemnity that the provincial people attach to such acts, there formally to renounce all claim to his father's estate. After that, he repaired to Cruchot's to execute a power of attorney for Des Grassins. Then he went through certain formalities to obtain a passport. And, finally, when the simple mourning dress which he had ordered from Paris arrived, he sent for a tailor of Saumur, and sold to him his now useless wardrobe; an act which greatly raised him in his uncle's estimation.

"Ah," said he, "you are now something like a man about to embark and make his fortune! This is just right."

"I beg you to believe, sir," replied Charles, 'that I know how to conform myself to my situation."

"What have you got there?" cried the old man, his eyes lighting up at a

handful of gold that Charles held out to him.

"I have collected together," replied Charles, "my rings and buttons, and all other superfluities of value; and not being acquainted in Saumur, I intended to ask you—"

"To buy them?" interrupted Grandet.

"Oh, no, uncle," said Charles, "but to recommend me to some honest man, who—"

"Give them to me," replied Grandet; "I will go upstairs, and soon tell you within a centime what they are worth. Jewelers' gold!" he continued, examining a long chain, "nineteen to twenty carats fine;" and he presently withdrew to weigh them.

"Cousin," said Charles to Eugenie, "may I offer you these two studs; they are very pretty to fasten ribbons around your wrist, and are quite in the fashion, too."

"I accept them, cousin," replied Eugenie, without the least hesitation, giving him a look of intelligence.

"Aunt," proceeded Charles, addressing Madame Grandet, "this was my mother's thimble; will you accept it from me?" and he presented to the old lady what for ten years she had desired to possess, a gold thimble.

"I cannot sufficiently thank you, Charles," she replied, with tears in her eyes. "Night and morning I will remember you in my prayers; and if I die, Eugenie will preserve the precious relic for you."

"They are worth nineteen hundred and eighty-nine francs and seventy-five centimes," said old Grandet, entering the parlor; "and to save you the trouble of selling them, I will myself pay you their value in livres."

Livres, along the shores of the Loire, means crowns originally of six livres, but at the present somewhat depreciated by wear. Grandet's meaning was, that his nephew should take them at their nominal value, without discount; a distinction that Charles did not understand.

"I dared not propose such a thing to you, uncle," said he, gratefully; "and yet I was unwilling to peddle them off in the town where you reside; I am much obliged by your kindness."

Grandet scratched his ear, and there was a moment of silence.

"My dear uncle," said Charles, at length, looking with a disquieted air as if fearful of wounding Grandet's susceptibility, "my aunt and cousin have been kind enough to accept from me some trifling remembrances; will you, too, do me the favor to accept these sleeve buttons? they will sometimes remind you of a poor fellow who, though far away, will frequently think of the only relations he has in the world."

"My dear boy!" exclaimed Grandet, "you must not rob yourself in this way! What have you got there, wife? a gold thimble! And you, *fifille?* What! diamond clasps! Well, my boy," shaking Charles's hand warmly, "I will take your buttons. But you—must permit me—to—pay your passage to—India. Yes, I wish to do that, and the more so, since in valuing your trinkets, I calculated only the weight of the gold; and, perhaps, being manufactured, it might bring a trifle more—so that's settled. I will give you two thousand crowns for the whole, passage money and all. I suppose Cruchot will lend them to me; I haven't a farthing myself unless Perrottet, who was in arrears for his rent, can pay up. I'll go and see how that is." And he took up his hat and gloves, and left the house.

"Then you are really going?" said Eugenie, with a look of mingled sadness and admiration.

"I must," replied Charles, despondingly.

For some days past, Charles's words, bearing, and actions, were those of a man greatly afflicted; but who, feeling that immense obligations were resting on him, drew courage from his very misfortunes. He wept no more. He had become a man. And never did Eugenie form a better estimate of his character, than when she saw him come down from his room in a dress of coarse black cloth. The same day, also, Eugenie and

her mother put on their mourning, and went with Charles to assist in the requiem for the repose of the soul of William Grandet, at the church of Saumur.

At noon Charles received letters from Paris, which he read in the parlor.

"Do your affairs go well?" asked Eugenie, in an undertone.

"Never ask such questions, daughter," cried Grandet. "I never tell you about my affairs, and why should you poke your nose into his? Let the boy alone."

"Oh, I have no secrets, uncle," said Charles.

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" replied the old man; "some of these days you'll learn to hold your tongue when you have business on hand."

When the lovers were by themselves in the garden, Charles said to Eugenie as he led her to the bench under the old walnut tree:

"I judged Alphonse rightly; he has done wonders, and settled my affairs with great skill. I owe nothing in Paris; all my furniture is well sold; and he writes me that, taking the advice of an experienced captain, he has employed the three thousand francs of overplus in purchasing a venture of European curiosities well adapted to the Indian market. He has forwarded these articles to Nantes, where is a vessel bound for Java. In five days, Eugenie, we must part, perhaps forever, but at all events for a long time. I cannot return for some years. Now as this is so, dear Eugenie, do not weigh my life against yours; I may die, and some advantageous marriage may present itself to you, and—"

"You love me, Charles, do you not?" interrupted Eugenie, in a quiet tone.

"Oh, yes! indeed I do!" he replied, passionately.

"Then," said Eugenie, firmly, "I will wait. Heavens!" continued she, starting up and repulsing Charles, who was about to reply to the devotion of her last remark, in a manner usual with lovers, "there is my father at the window!"

And so saying, she fled like a frightened fawn to the house, and soon found herself, without knowing how she came there, in the darkest part of the passageway leading to Nanon's room, and close by her door.

Here Charles, who had followed her, took her hand and pressed it to his heart, and then gently drew her to his bosom. Eugenie resisted no longer, but gave and received one of the sweetest, purest, and at the same time the most unqualified of kisses.

"Dear Eugenie!" said Charles; "a cousin is far better than a brother, for he may be a husband."

"Amen!" cried Nanon, opening the door.

The frightened lovers fled again, and this time directed their steps toward the parlor, where Eugenie, with great application, resumed her work, and Charles began to read very attentively the litany to the Holy Virgin in Madame Grandet's prayer-book.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Nanon, who soon followed them, "if we are not all saying our prayers!"

As soon as Charles had positively fixed the day of his departure, old Grandet exerted himself to convince his nephew that he took a great interest in his welfare. He was very liberal to him in all things where money was not concerned, and took pains to find a carpenter to make some chests for him; and when satisfied that the man charged too high a price, he determined to make them himself. He rose early in the morning and went to his work-room, where he sawed, planed, fitted and nailed some boards into very decent chests; he also, with his own hands, packed Charles's luggage, and took the pains to see the boxes put on board a boat on the Loire, to be thence duly expedited to Nantes.

Ever since the kiss in the passageway, the hours had flown with terrible rapidity for Eugenie, and at times she almost made up her mind to follow her cousin. Those who have felt the power of the most attaching of passions, who have seen its duration abridged, day by day, by age, by time, by disease, by any human ill or casualty, can understand Eugenie's unhappiness. She often wept as she walked

in the garden, now too circumscribed for her; as was also the yard, the house, the town; she rushed in anticipation upon the vast expanse of the ocean.

XIX.

On the day preceding Charles's departure, and during the absence of old Grandet and Nanon, the precious dressing-case was solemnly installed in the only drawer of the bureau which had a lock, and where now laid the empty purse. The deposit of this treasure was not made without a goodly number of tears and kisses, after which Eugenie put the key in her bosom.

"I shall always keep it there," she said.

"And there will my heart and thoughts always be, too!" said Charles. "We are now married in spirit. I have your word; take mine. I am yours forever."

And "yours forever," was repeated by each. No promise ever made on earth was purer than this; for the sacredness of Eugenie's love for the moment sanctified that of Charles.

The next morning's breakfast was a sad one, and notwithstanding the golden embroidered dressing-gown, and a cross *a la Jeanette* that Charles gave Nanon, she too, who had no reason to conceal her feelings, had moistened eyes.

"To think," cried she, "of that poor dear going on the great ocean! May God be with him!"

At half-past ten the family set out to accompany Charles as far as the diligence office. Nanon had unchained the dog, locked the door, and insisted on carrying Charles's carpet-bag. All the shop-keepers, etc., looked out to see the cortege pass, and Cruchot, the notary, joined them on the square.

"Eugenie," whispered her mother, "do not go crying along the streets!"

"Nephew," said old Grandet, as they reached the door of the inn, and kissing him on both ckeeks as he spoke, "go poor, return rich. You will find your father's honor safe; I answer for it; I, Grandet; and it will remain for you only to—"

"Thank you, thank you, my dear uncle!" cried Charles, greatly affected; "you relieve me from half the pain of my departure." And, not having understood the words, and ignorant of the purposes of his uncle, he shed tears of gratitude on the old man's weather-beaten face, while Eugenie pressed with all her might her father's and cousin's hands.

The notary, alone, smiled; for he, alone, suspected Grandet's plans in regard to his deceased brother's estate.

The party stood watching the diligence as it rolled away, and as it turned a corner and disappeared, old Grandet muttered:

"Humph! a good riddance!"

But, as it happened, the notary was the only one who heard him.

"Mother," whispered Eugenie, as she turned to go home, "I wish that for an instant I could be omnipotent, like God!"

XX.

It is here necessary, in order not to interrupt the course of events that took place in the Grandet family, to take a prospective glance at the miser's operations in Paris, through the agency of Monsieur des Grassins, and relate those details now, out of the exact order of their occurrence.

A month after the banker's arrival in Paris, Monsieur Grandet had in his possession a certificate for two hundred thousand livres of *rentes*, bought at 80 0-0.

In all that related to the affair of William Grandet, the miser's foresight and calculation were fully vindicated.

At the Bank of France, as every one knows, is found the most ample information concerning all the large fortunes of Paris, and its departments. The names of Monsieur des Grassins and Monsieur Felix Grandet of Saumur were both well known there, and enjoyed a high celebrity. The arrival, therefore, of the banker of Saumur at Paris, charged, as it was said, to liquidate in honor the house of William Grandet, served to screen the

deceased merchant's memory from the obloquy of protests. The seals were broken in presence of the creditors, and the notary of the house proceeded to make out the inventory. Shortly after this, Monsieur des Grassins convened the creditors together, and they elected as liquidators the banker of Saumur conjointly with one of their own number; and to them were confided the necessary powers, so that they might save at once the honor of the family and the debts of the house. The credit of Felix Grandet, and the encouragement he held out to the creditors through Monsieur des Grassins, greatly facilitated matters, and all was concluded, as old Grandet wished, without opposition. No one thought of passing his claim to Profit and Loss, "for," they all said, "Grandet of Saumur is safe."

Six months elapsed. The creditors had bought up all the notes of the house that were in circulation, and put them away in their portfolios. This was what the cooper desired in the first place.

Three months after, the liquidators paid the creditors a dividend of twenty-two per cent, being the proceeds of the whole of the goods and chattels as per inventory.

This was all done with scrupulous fidelity, and the creditors were delighted to acknowledge and proclaim the admirable and indisputable honor of the Grandets. And after they had promulgated these encomiums for a reasonable time, they applied for the balance of their money, by writing, collectively, to old Grandet.

"Humph! we're all right, so far!" cried the miser, throwing the letter into the fire; "have patience, my dear little friends!"

In reply to this letter, Grandet demanded the deposit, with a notary in Paris, of all the claims against his brother's estate, accompanied by receipts for the payment already made, under pretext of simplifying the business and ascertaining its exact condition. This demand gave rise to numberless objections.

Speaking generally, the creditor is a sort of maniac; to-day, ready to negotiate, to-morrow, resolved to contest everything, sword in hand; the next day, free to cancel his claim. To-day his wife is in a good humor, his youngest child has cut its last tooth—everything goes well at home, and he is determined not to lose a penny; to-morrow it rains; he cannot go out; he grows melancholy; he says *yes* to all propositions which bring matters to an end; the next day, however, he asks for security; and before the month is out he will issue an execution against you.

Grandet was no stranger to these fits of creditors; observation had taught him their existence, and the creditors of his brother now confirmed his experience. Some of them became irritated, and flatly refused to make the deposit.

"All goes right!" said old Grandet.

Others, however, consented to the deposit, on condition of being allowed to verify their claims, to give none of them up, and to reserve the right of hereafter declaring the bankruptcy. This brought on a new correspondence, at the close of which old Grandet consented to the reserved right, and then, all concurring, the deposit was made.

"The old miser is making game of you and of us," said some of the creditors to Des Grassins.

Twenty-three months after William Grandet's decease, many commercial men, absorbed by the onward and exciting movements in Paris, had forgotten their Grandet claims, or remembered them only to say: "We begin to believe that the twenty-two per cent is all that we shall ever obtain in that quarter."

The miser had calculated on the potency of time, which he styled an excellent friend.

At the end of the third year, M. des Grassins wrote to old Grandet that the creditors were willing to compound and surrender their claims on receiving an additional dividend of ten per cent on the balance of two millions three hundred and forty thousand francs.

Grandet replied that the notary and banker who were heavily indebted to his brother's house, and whose failures had caused his brother's death, were alive, and had recovered themselves; therefore, they must be sued.

By this means, at the end of the fourth year, the claims were reduced to two millions. Then ensued some six months of negotiation between the creditors and liquidators, and the liquidators and old Grandet. Toward the end of the ninth month thereafter, the miser replied to the liquidators that his nephew, having made a fortune in India, and having signified his intention of paying his father's debts in full, he, Monsieur Grandet, could not take it upon himself to interfere without consulting his nephew, for whose instructions he was now waiting.

Until the middle of the fifth year, the creditors were held in check by the words "payment in full," from time to time put forth by the sublime cooper, who all the while laughed in his sleeve, and pronounced—never without an accompanying oath and sneer—the words "these Parisians!"

But the creditors were reserved for a fate unheard of in the annals of commerce; as will be seen in the course of this history when revolving events again cause them to appear in it.

When stocks had advanced to 109, old Grandet sold out his investment, and brought home from Paris four millions three hundred thousand francs in gold.

Monsieur des Grassins remained in Paris, and for these reasons. In the first place he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies. Then, he fell in love with one of the prettiest actresses of the Theatre de Madame; and there was the devil to pay at the banker's. It is useless to comment on such conduct. It was considered immoral at Saumur, and his wife thought herself very fortunate to get her property separated from his and manage the house at Saumur herself. Meantime, the Cruchots so bruited and exaggerated the affair that the standing of the Des Grassins was much shaken, and the banker's wife was glad to make a bad match for her daughter, and abandon all hope of Eugenie for her son. Adolphe, therefore, joined his father in Paris, and soon became no better than he should be. Thus the Cruchots triumphed over their rivals.

"Your husband has not a grain of common sense," said the miser to Madame des Grassins, while lending her a sum of money on ample security; "I pity you sincerely, for you are a good little woman,"

"Ah, sir!" replied the poor lady, "who would have thought, the day he left your house, that he was hastening to his ruin!"

"Heaven is my witness," said the old man, "that I did everything in my power to prevent him from going. The president was eager to go in his stead. But now we know," continued he, rolling up the whites of his eyes, "now we know why he was so obstinate in the matter!"

Of course, old Grandet was under no obligation to Monsieur des Grassins.

XXI.

In every situation of life, women have more causes for grief, and feel it more deeply than men. Man has his strength and the exercise of his power. He acts, he moves about, he finds occupation, he looks to the future and there finds consolation—and thus did Charles. But woman dwells at home; she remains face to face with sorrow; having nothing to distract her attention from it, she descends to the bottom of the abyss which trouble has opened beneath her, measures and fills it with her vows and tears—and thus did Eugenie. She was but initiating herself into her destiny! To feel, to love, to suffer, to devote herself, will always be the text of woman's life; and Eugenie's life was to be woman's life in all things save its consolations. Troubles do not keep us long in waiting, and Eugenie's came soon. The day after Charles's departure, the course of events assumed their ordinary channel in Grandet's house, for all but her; she found it, on a sudden, stripped of its charms; and felt but a sad consolation in keeping Charles's room exactly in the state in which he left it—an arrangement unknown to the miser, and to which her mother and Nanon assented.

"Who knows," said she, "but he may return sooner than we think?"

"I should like," said Nanon, "to have him here again, for I began to get used to him; he was such a sweet and well-behaved young man! and so pretty, too, with his hair frizzed like a girl's."

Eugenie stared at Nanon in reply.

"Holy Virgin!" continued the woman, "why, Mademoiselle Eugenie; your eyes frighten me! Don't look at a body so!"

From this day, Eugenie's beauty took a new character. The serious thoughts with which love had burdened her heart, and the dignity of a woman knowing herself beloved, imparted to her features that kind of light that painters express by the halo. On her return from church, the day after parting with Charles, she vowed to go to mass every day. She bought at the bookseller's a map of the world, and hung it near her looking-glass, that she might follow her cousin in his voyage to India, and ask him, night and morning, "Are you well? Are you sad? Are you thinking of me?"

Of a morning, she would sit sadly under the old walnut tree, where they had said so many nothings to each other; where they had built so many castles in the air. She thought of the future as she looked at the little spot of sky that the inclosing walls permitted her to see, and at the part of the house where was Charles's room. In short, her love was that fervid, intense passion which pervades every thought, regulates every action, and becomes a part of the very being.

When the friends of the family called in of an evening she was animated, for she disguised her feelings; but during all the day she talked of Charles to her mother and Nanon; and Nanon made up her mind that she could compassionate her young mistress's sorrows without failing in her duty to her old master.

"Well, mademoiselle," she would say, "if I had a man of my own, I would have followed him to the end of the world. Yes! I would have killed myself for him. But there's no such luck for me! Would you believe it though, mademoiselle? Old Cornoiller keeps tagging to my petticoats and inquiring about my money, just like the people that ask about your father's money and come after you. But I understand him; I am cunning, if I am as big as a house! I rather like the fellow, too!"

Thus passed away more than a month, and their former monotonous life was now animated by the secret that bound the three women together more intimately than before. Night and morning, Eugenie opened the dressing-case to gaze at her aunt's miniature, and to find Charles's features in the picture. One Sunday morning, her mother surprised her at this recreation, and Madame Grandet then learned the secret of Eugenie's loan to her cousin.

"And you gave him all," cried the terror-stricken mother; "what *will* your father say? On New-year's day, you know, he will ask to see your purse as usual."

Eugenie set her eyes in despair, and for that day both of them were a prey to great mental suffering; they even forgot to go to mass—for, in three days, the year 1819 would come to an end. In three days a terrible drama would commence; a domestic tragedy, without poison, or sword, or bloodshed; but, so far as the actors were concerned, a tragedy more heartrending than all that ever occurred in the family of the Atridæ.

"What will become of us?" said Madame Grandet, dropping her knitting into her lap.

The poor woman had suffered so much trouble latterly, that she had not yet finished her sleeves for the winter; and this domestic fact, apparently so trivial, proved to be a serious matter. For want of these sleeves, she took a violent cold while she was suffering from a fever, brought on by one of her husband's fits of ungovernable rage.

"If you had only confided your secret to me, my poor child!" said the good woman, two days after this, "we might have had time to write to Monsieur des Grassins, at Paris; he might have sent us gold pieces like yours, and although Grandet knows them every one, perhaps—"

"But where should we have got the

money to pay for them?" asked Eugenie.

"I would have pledged *my rights,*" said her mother; "Monsieur des Grassins might well have done as much for old friends."

"Is it too late now?" said Eugenie, in a hollow and troubled voice, "for to-morrow we must wish him a happy New Year in his room."

"But suppose I should go and see Cruchot about it?" said her mother.

"No," said Eugenie, resolutely; "that would put us in their power; besides, I have resolved on my course; I have done what I had a right to do, and I do not repent of it. God will protect me. His will be done."

The next morning—the 1st of January, 1820—the extreme terror of both mother and daughter suggested to them an excuse to avoid going formally into Grandet's room. The winter of 1819–20 was one of the most rigorous of the age, and the roofs in Saumur were encumbered with snow. As soon as Madame Grandet heard her husband stirring, she called to him, saying:

"Grandet, let Nanon make a fire in my room; the cold is so intense that I shiver in my bed, and I have reached an age when I need comfortable things. And then," she added, after a short pause, "Eugenie shall come in and dress here; the poor child will get ill—it is so cold. Afterward, we will go and wish you a happy New Year in the parlor, by the side of a good fire."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" cried the miser; "how your tongue wags! This is one way to begin a new year; but I presume you have not been eating bread soaked in wine."

A moment of silence ensued.

"Well," at length continued the old man, "you shall have your way, Madame Grandet. You are a good woman, and I should be sorry were anything to happen to you in your old age; though in general," he added, by way of remark, "the La Bertellieres are pretty tough and hardy—isn't it so? However, their prosperity has descended to us; so I forgive them."

"You are merry this morning," said the poor woman, gravely.

"I am always merry," said he, singing:

> "Merry, merry, the jolly old cooper,
> We'll tinker your leaky tubs;"

and he entered his wife's room entirely dressed.

"Well, I swear it *is* cold!" said he; "but never mind, wife; we'll have a good breakfast. Des Grassins has sent me a truffled *pate de foie gras,* and I am going to fetch it from the diligence." Then coming close to his wife, he whispered: "He should have added to his present a double Napoleon for Eugenie, for I have no gold left; I *had* a few old pieces, that's a fact, but I was forced to part with them in trade." And he kissed her on her forehead, to celebrate the first day of the year.

"Eugenie," said her mother, after the old man had gone out, "I don't know what has happened to your father, but he is in a good humor this morning. We'll get out of this difficulty, after all."

"What's the matter with the good man this morning!" said Nanon, as she came in to make the fire. "The first thing he said to me was: 'Good-morning! Happy New Year—great ox! Go and light a fire in my wife's room—she's cold.' But I was perfectly dumfounded when he held out to me a five-franc piece, fresh from the mint. Look, madame! Oh! he's a fine man, and a worthy man, too. There are some that grow stingy as they grow old; but he is as good as your cordial, and grows better every day."

The secret of old Grandet's good humor was the entire success of his late speculation, of which he had just received the intelligence. Des Grassins, after deducting the amount the cooper owed him for the discount on the one hundred and fifty thousand francs of Holland obligations, and for the balance which he had advanced to complete the purchase of two hundred thousand livres of *rentes,* had sent to Grandet, by the diligence, thirty thousand francs in crowns, the balance of the half-yearly interest on the stocks, and

announced the price of *rentes* to be 89*f.* Toward the end of the month, the most noted capitalists bought at 92*f.* Thus, Grandet in two months had gained twelve per cent on his investment, had his money placed securely, and was thereafter to receive a dividend of a hundred thousand francs every six months. He began, now, to perceive the advantage of holding the public stocks, an investment to which the inhabitants of the provinces have usually an invincible repugnance; and, in anticipation, he saw himself, in less than five years, the proprietor of from six to seven millions; which, joined to his real estate, would make a colossal fortune.

"Where under the sun can Monsieur Grandet be going to, so early in the morning, and running as if he saw a fire?" said the shopkeepers, as they were opening their windows. And when they saw him return from the diligence office, followed by a porter who trundled a wheelbarrow full of sacks, "Water flows always toward the river," one of them said; "the good man was going for his money."

"It comes to him," said another, "from Paris, from Froidfond, from Holland."

"He will end by buying Saumur," said a third.

"He isn't afraid of the cold," said a wife to her husband: "he is always attending to his business."

"Ho, ho!" said a tradesman to Grandet himself, as he hurried along, "if that incommodes you, Monsieur Grandet, I'll take it off your hands with all the pleasure in the world."

"It's only a parcel of sous," replied the miser, coldly.

"It's silver," whispered the porter to the tradesman.

"Hark ye," said the miser to the porter, as he opened the door of his house, "if you ever wish to work for me again, keep your mouth shut."

"The old fox!" said the porter, to himself; "I thought he was deaf."

"Here are twenty sous for your new year," said the miser; "and remember, don't blab! Now, clear out. Nanon will take back your wheelbarrow. Nanon," he continued, when the porter had disappeared, "have our linnets gone to mass?"

"Yes, sir," said Nanon.

"To work, then, in a hurry," replied the miser, piling the sacks on her shoulders, and following with his share of the load. The crowns were soon transported to his laboratory, where he shut himself up.

"When breakfast is ready," said he to Nanon, "knock on the wall; and take the wheelbarrow back to the office. We will breakfast at ten."

"Perhaps," said Madame Grandet to Eugenie, as they returned from mass, "perhaps your father may not ask to see your purse at all, and then, in some way, we can certainly replace the gold before your birthday; in case he speaks of it, however, you must be very cold and chilly."

As for old Grandet, he in due time came downstairs, thinking about changing his Parisian crowns into good gold, chuckling over his speculation in the funds, and determined to make other investments. As soon as he entered the parlor, the ladies wished him a happy new year.

"Eugenie, my child," said he, as she threw her arms about his neck, "I am always toiling for you and for your happiness. To be happy, people must have money; you might as well be out of the world as out of money. Here's a Napoleon for you, brand-new, that I sent to Paris for on your account. Only to think of it, *fifille!* You are now the only one in the house that has any gold: bring me your purse, *fifille!*"

"Oh!" said Eugenie, with a shudder, "it is so cold upstairs, papa! let us go to breakfast first."

"All the same, child," said the miser; "we'll see it after breakfast, and it will help our digestion. That fat Des Grassins," he continued, "sent us this *pate;* so fall to: it don't cost us anything. He is getting on famously at Paris, and I like him. Besides, he is rendering Charles a good service, gratis. Oh, but this is good, though," he mumbled, with his mouth full. "Why don't you eat, wife? it will nourish you for two whole days."

"I am not hungry," replied Madame Grandet, in great distress of mind; "and, besides, I am not at all well."

The approach of an ignominious and public death is less horrible to a condemned criminal, than was the approaching finale of this sad breakfast to Madame Grandet and Eugenie. The more gayly the old man talked and laughed, the more their hearts sank in despair; Eugenie had, however, one support in the emergency. She drew strength from her love.

"For him, for Charles," she said to herself, "I would face death itself."

"Take the things away, Nanon," said Grandet, when, toward eleven o'clock, the breakfast was over: "take the things, but leave the table: we want it to count over Eugenie's little treasures. Not so little, either," he continued; "there are fifty-nine hundred and fifty-nine francs, and forty this morning makes six thousand all but a franc. Well, I will give you that one to make it even, because you see, *fifille*—Well, Nanon! what do you stand there listening for! Show us your heels and go to work. Eugenie," he resumed, when Nanon vanished, "I must ask a favor of you; I want you to give me your gold—you won't refuse it to your poor dear old father, will you, my little daughter?"

The two women were struck dumb!

"I have not a piece of gold in the world," pursued the miser; "I had some but I parted with it. I will give you for yours six thousand francs *in livres*, and you shall invest them in a way that I'll point out to you. You need not think any more about your *dozen*, for when I give you away in marriage—which I shall do, soon—your husband will present you with the grandest dozen that was ever heard of in the provinces. Listen now, *fifille;* a fine opportunity has just occurred to invest your six thousand francs in the government securities, from which you will get, every six months, nearly two hundred francs of interest; and that without having your capital touched for taxes, repairs, or anything that eats up a revenue. Perhaps you have an objection to parting with your gold, eh, *fifille?* Never mind. Bring it to me and I will hereafter pick up for you other pieces just as good—the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Genovines, the rupees of the Mogul; and with what I shall give you on your birthdays and other days, you will, in three short years, have made up the whole of your dear, little, pretty, darling golden treasure! What do you say to that, *fifille!* Come, lift up your head, and get it this minute. You ought to kiss me and hug me for thus letting you into the secret of accumulating money; for, in reality, crowns live and move like men; they toil, they sweat, they produce."

Eugenie rose; but after having taken a step or two toward the door, she turned abruptly back, looked her father full in the face, and said:

"*My* gold is no longer in my possession."

"No longer in your possession!" echoed Grandet, starting back on his haunches like a horse that hears a cannon suddenly fired within ten feet of him.

"Yes; no longer in my possession," repeated Eugenie.

"But you don't mean that!" gasped the miser.

"Yes, father, I do mean that," answered the poor girl, steadily.

"*By my father's knife!*" shouted the old cooper; and when he swore that oath the very rafters trembled.

"God in heaven!" exclaimed Nanon, bursting into the parlor at the terrific sound of the well-known oath. "See, my old mistress is fainting!"

"Grandet," said the suffering wife, "your fury will kill me."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" he replied, "your family are tough; they don't die so easily. Eugenie," he continued, striding up to her, "what have you done with your gold?"

"Sir," she replied, resolutely, kneeling to her mother, "my mother is dreadfully ill; I beg you not to kill her outright."

And, indeed, Grandet was himself startled at the lividness of his wife's countenance.

"Nanon," said the old lady, feebly, "help me upstairs. I believe I am dying."

XXII.

NANON and Eugenie each took her by an arm and succeeded, though not without great difficulty, in getting her up to her room. Grandet remained in the parlor alone; but in a few minutes he came partly upstairs, and cried out:

"Eugenie, when your mother is in bed, come down again."

Eugenie replied that she would come; in a few minutes she did so, after having endeavored to reassure her mother.

"Daughter," said Grandet, "what have you done with your gold?"

"Father," she replied, coldly, at the same time taking from the mantel-piece the Napoleon which she had that morning received, and handing it to him, "if you make me presents which I am not to be the mistress of, take them back again!"

The miser seized the Napoleon and put it into his pocket. "I believe," said he, 'I shall never give you anything more—not even that!" snapping his thumb-nail against his tooth. "You despise your father, eh? You don't know what a father is! If he is not everything to you he will be nothing. Where is your gold?"

"Father," replied Eugenie, "I love and respect you, notwithstanding your unreasonableness; but I must remind you that I am twenty-three years old. You have so often told me that I am of age, it is not strange if I remember it. I have done with my money what it pleased me to do; and you may take my word for it, it is well bestowed."

"Where?" asked the miser.

"That is my secret," said Eugenie; "you have secrets, have you not?"

"Am I not the head of my family? Have I not a right to manage my own affairs?" cried Grandet.

"Yes, father," she replied, "and this is my affair."

"It must be a very bad affair, Mademoiselle Grandet, since you cannot tell your father about it."

"No, it is an excellent affair; and yet I cannot tell my father about it."

"At least," said the old man, "you can let me know when you parted with your gold?"

Eugenie shook her head.

"You had it on your birthday, had you not?" continued the miser.

Eugenie, who had become as cunning through love as her father had through avarice, reiterated the shake of her head.

"Well, did ever any one see such obstinacy, or such a theft!" cried old Grandet, in a tone that increased in violence until it resounded through the house. "What! here, in my own house; some one has dared to take your gold here, the only gold that was in it! And I can't find out who did it. Gold is a precious thing. The most discreet girl may commit a fault; that happens every day among the nobility, and townspeople, too, for that matter; but to give away gold—for you have given it to some one, eh?"

Eugenie was impassible.

"Was there ever such a daughter," said the miser. "Tell me, am I, or am I not, your father? If you deposited your money, you must have a receipt."

"Father," said Eugenie, at length, "was the money my own, or yours? and was I, or was I not, free to do what I pleased with it?"

"You are but a child," cried the miser evasively.

"I am of age," replied Eugenie.

Baffled by his daughter's firmness and good sense, old Grandet grew livid with rage; he stamped his foot, and cried out, "Viper! ungrateful wretch! You knew I loved you and you took advantage of that to rob me." He paused, grinding his teeth. "You must have thrown it away on that beggar in morocco boots. By my father's knife—I cannot—I cannot now disinherit you, but I curse you, you, your cousin, and your children! If it was Charles to whom—but no, that's impossible! If I thought it was that puppy—"

He paused and looked full at his daughter with the ferocity of a tiger; but she sustained his violence without blenching an instant.

"She doesn't flinch," he said, speaking to himself. "She doesn't even wink. She

is more of a Grandet than I am myself. Tell me," said he, aloud, "you couldn't, you didn't part with it for nothing? tell me."

Eugenie replied by a sarcastic look; but said nothing.

"You are in my house," the miser continued, "in your father's house; if you wish to remain here, you must submit to my commands. Your own priest will tell you that you must obey your father."

Eugenie bowed assent to this last proposition but made no answer.

"You have offended me in the tenderest point," said the old man, "and I will not see you again until you are more submissive. Go to your own room, and stay there till I give you permission to come out. Nanon will bring your bread and water there. Do you hear? March!"

Eugenie, overcome at length by the atrocity of the scene, felt her eyes filling with tears, and she withdrew precipitately to her mother's room.

Old Grandet went into the garden, where he strode up and down through the snow for some time; then, thinking it probable that Eugenie had gone to her mother's room instead of her own, and gratified with the hope of catching her thus disobeying his orders, he returned to the house, crept upstairs as stealthily as a cat, and burst into his wife's apartment where he found the two ladies locked in each other's arms, the mother having just said, as he entered,

"Be consoled, my child, your father will relent."

"She has a father no longer," thundered Grandet, in reply. "Is it possible, Madame Grandet, that you and I have brought up such an undutiful child? A fine education she has had, truly, and a religious one to boot. How comes it, mademoiselle, that you disobey me? why are you out of your prison without leave? Go back, do you hear?"

"Will you," said Madame Grandet, with unusual energy, "will you deprive me of my child's attention when I am ill?"

"If you wish to have her," cried the miser, "take her away and let the house be rid of both at once. Where's the gold? What's become of the gold?"

Eugenie, without a word of reply, rose from her mother's arms, cast on the miser a look of the most lofty scorn, and with the air of a queen retired to her chamber.

"Nanon," cried the miser, leaning over the stairs, "put out the parlor fire;" and then returning to his wife's room, he drew a chair before the fire and sat down. "She must have given it to that rascal, Charles," said he gloomily.

Madame Grandet now found, in her anxiety at the danger that threatened her daughter, and her indignation at this horrible imputation, courage to reply steadily.

"I knew nothing of this matter, Monsieur Grandet, and you need not seek to frighten me into confessions. But of one thing I am certain; your unmanly, brutal violence is killing me, and I shall never leave this room alive. It would better become you to spare me just now, especially as I have never given you the slightest cause of offense. Your daughter, too, loves you, and I believe is as innocent as a babe. You owe it to yourself and to her to revoke your sentence; her room is cold, and you will kill her as you are killing me."

"By Heaven!" replied old Grandet, "she shall never leave her room till she satisfies me about the gold. There she shall stay, and live on bread and water. What! am I, the master of this house, not to know what becomes of the gold that I brought into it? They were the only rupees in France."

"Eugenie," replied the wife, "is our only child; and even if she threw them into the river—"

"Into the river!" exclaimed Grandet, "into the river! Are you crazy, madame?—No matter—what I have said, I have said. If you expect to have any peace in this house, make your daughter confess. Women know how to manage women. Whatever she has done, you know I can't eat her. Is she afraid of me? Suppose she *has* covered this cousin

with ducats? He is on the ocean, you know—I can't go after him."

"Well, then," began Madame Grandet—but at the instant, inspired by the power of her fever with unwonted penetration, she perceived an ominous and terrible flash of exultation in her husband's countenance, which arrested her intended disclosure; and, changing her intention without changing her tone she continued, firmly and calmly. "Well, then, you think I have more influence over her than you! She has said nothing to me; in that she resembles you."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" said Grandet, "how limber your tongue is this morning! On my soul, I believe you are bullying me. Perhaps," he added, looking sternly at her, "you are conspiring with her against me!"

"If you wish to kill me," said his wife, "you have only to go on as you have begun. I tell you—and if it cost me my life, I will repeat it—your conduct toward your daughter is unmanly and outrageous. She is far more reasonable than you are—that money was her own—she could not but have made good use of it; and God alone has a right to know our good works. I beg you to do her justice. By so doing you will save both me and her. Grandet, give me back my daughter."

"Good-by," said Grandet, "for if you won't leave me, I'll leave you. I can't live, it seems, in my own house." Then going into the hall, he said to Eugenie, through the closed door; "Cry away! cry away! You have done enough to cry for. What good will it do you to take the sacrament six times in three months, if you give away your father's gold in this way to a good-for-nothing, who will eat your heart out when you have nothing more to give him. You'll see what your fine cousin amounts to, with his morocco boots and his puppy's manners. If he had a heart or a soul, he wouldn't have run off with a poor girl's money—I can tell you that." And the old man tramped down the stairs, and slammed the street door behind him.

When he was gone Eugenie returned to her mother.

"My dear mother," said she, "you have shown a great deal of courage for me."

"You see by this, my child," replied Madame Grandet, "how far unlawful things carry us. I was compelled to tell a falsehood."

"I will pray God to punish *me* for it," cried Eugenie.

"Is it true," said Nanon, coming in at the moment in great distress, "that Mademoiselle Eugenie is put on bread and water for the rest of her life?"

"What if I am, Nanon?" said Eugenie, quietly.

"Do you think," said Nanon, "that I will eat *frippe* while the daughter of the house eats dry bread? No, no!"

"Nanon," said Eugenie, "don't disturb me about that."

"I'll keep quiet," replied Nanon; "but you'll see."

That day old Grandet dined alone, for the first time in more than twenty years.

"What have you got in your stew-pan? I hear it bubbling over the kitchen fire," snapped the old man.

"I am frying-out some fat," said Nanon.

"There will be company here to-night," continued Grandet; "light the fire."

About eight o'clock the Cruchots, Madame des Grassins and her son made their appearance, and were astonished at finding no one in the parlor except old Grandet.

"My wife is a little indisposed, and Eugenie is waiting on her," said the miser.

After an hour had elapsed, Madame des Grassins, who had stepped up to see the miser's wife, returned to the parlor.

"How is Madame Grandet?" all inquired.

"She is far from being well," said the banker's lady. "She seems to be *very* ill. At her age, Monsieur Grandet, you ought to be very cautious with her."

"We'll see about that," replied Grandet, coolly.

When the visitors withdrew, and were in the street on their way home, Madame des Grassins said:

"Something strange must have happened at the Grandets. The mother is very ill without being conscious of it, and Eugenie's eyes are red with crying. Can they wish to marry her against her consent?"

After the miser had gone to bed, Nanon came upstairs softly, in her stocking feet, to Eugenie's room, and brought her a *pate* she had been making in the stewpan.

"Here, Mademoiselle Eugenie," said the kind-hearted woman. "Cornoiller gave me a hare, and I have made it into a pie for you; I bought the flour and butter with my own money. You eat so little that this will last you a week, and the weather is so cold, there is no danger of its spoiling."

"Thank you, dear Nanon!" whispered Eugenie, squeezing the servant's hand.

"I have made it very good and delicate," replied Nanon, "and *he* didn't find me out," and she escaped downstairs, thinking she heard the miser.

XXIII.

For some weeks old Grandet came constantly to see his wife, at different hours of the day, but never once pronounced his daughter's name, nor made the slightest allusion to her. Madame Grandet grew gradually worse, but nothing could change the old man's determination. He continued his usual occupations; but he stammered no more; he talked less; and became even sharper than ever in his bargains.

"Something is the matter at the Grandets," said the Cruchots and the Des Grassins.

"What can have happened at Monsieur Grandet's?" became the usual question at all the soirees in Saumur.

Eugenie went sometimes to prayers, escorted by Nanon; and when Madame Des Grassins would waylay her and address some question to her, she always evaded it.

Nevertheless, it became impossible to keep from the Cruchots and Des Grassins the fact of Eugenie's imprisonment; and then, although no one could tell who betrayed the secret, the whole town soon learned that ever since the first of January, Mademoiselle Grandet, by her father's orders, had been shut up in her room without fire, and fed on bread and water; that Nanon made dainties for her clandestinely, and took them to her in the middle of the night; and that the poor girl was not permitted to see or wait on her sick mother, excepting when the miser was out of the house.

The old man's conduct was commented on with great severity; and the inhabitants unanimously put him, so to speak, out of the pale of the law. As he passed along the streets every one whispered and pointed a finger at him.

When Eugenie came through the street to go to matins or vespers, all ran to their windows to catch a glimpse of her countenance, on which angelic sweetness was impressed. Her seclusion and her father's anger were nothing to her; for did she not constantly see her map of the world, the little bench, the garden, the arbor? For a long time both she and her father were ignorant of the fact that they were the town talk. And her religion and her love sustained her under her privations.

But one source of grief was gnawing at her heart. Her mother was gradually wasting away. Eugenie would often reproach herself with being the innocent cause of the slow and cruel malady that was consuming a life so dear to her; though her remorse on this point attached her the more strongly to the absent object of her love. Every morning, as soon as her father went out, she flew to her mother's bedside; and when Nanon came in with her breakfast, she would silently point the servant's attention to that pale, waning face, and burst into tears.

Madame Grandet one day spoke of Charles.

"Where can he be? and why does he not write?" said she.

Both mother and daughter were ignorant of distances.

"We will think of him," replied Eu-

genie; "but do not let us talk of him, dear mother; you are ill, and you must be first in all our thoughts."

But Charles was first in Eugenie's thoughts.

"My dear child," said Madame Grandet. "I do not regret my approaching death. God has been very merciful to me."

"I thank you for the interest you take in my health," she would sometimes say to her husband, in answer to his cold, mechanical inquiries; "but if you wish to render my few remaining days happy, forgive your daughter and show yourself a Christian husband and father." After which, she would follow up her remarks by the holiest and most touching supplications; but he would reply:

"You are a little pale to-day, my poor wife."

Complete forgetfulness of his daughter seemed to be engraven on his brow and face. He was not affected even by the tears that his cold, indifferent answers brought down the cheeks of his wife.

"May God pardon you, husband, as I do!" she would say. "You will one day need indulgence and forgiveness."

When the faithful Nanon made her appearance at the market, her ears were saluted by complaints against her master; who, however, the servant defended out of pride for the family.

"Well," she would reply, "do we not all grow hard as we grow old? and why won't you let him? Don't tell me your stories. Mademoiselle Eugenie lives like a queen. Suppose she does keep her room —that's her fancy. Besides, we, at our house, have our own reasons for what we do."

One evening toward the end of spring, Madame Grandet, consumed by grief even more than by bodily disease, and finding all her prayers and entreaties to reconcile Eugenie and the miser were unsuccessful, confided her troubles to the Cruchots.

"Is it possible!" cried the president; "put a daughter of three-and-twenty on bread and water! This is entirely illegal, and she can protest—"

"Hush, nephew," interrupted the notary, "none of your law slang on this subject. Make yourself easy, Madame Grandet; this imprisonment shall terminate to-morrow."

Eugenie, overhearing some conversation of which she was the subject, here entered her mother's room.

"Gentlemen," said she, advancing with dignity, "I beg you not to interfere in this matter. My father is master of his own house, and while I remain beneath his roof, it is my duty to obey him. His conduct must not be submitted to the arbitration of strangers; he is accountable for his family government to God only; and I ask it from your friendship to let the thing rest in silence. To make public complaint of my father, would be to attack our own self-respect. I thank you, sincerely, for the interest you take in my welfare; but you would far more oblige me by checking the disagreeable stories that circulate through the town about us, than by seeking to interfere in our domestic troubles."

"The child is right," said Madame Grandet.

"Mademoiselle Eugenie," said the notary, respectfully, struck with the beauty that solitude, love, and melancholy had imparted to her countenance, "the best way to stop people from talking about you, is for your father to remove his tyrannical restraint over your liberty."

"Daughter," said Madame Grandet, after a pause, "we will let Monsieur Cruchot arrange it as he thinks best, since he answers for his success. He knows your father, and understands best how to manage him. If you wish to see me enjoy my little remnant of life, you and your father must become reconciled to each other."

The next morning, in conformity to a custom introduced since Eugenie's imprisonment, old Grandet went to walk in the garden, and the time he now chose for his exercise was that in which Eugenie was combing her hair. When he reached the walnut-tree, he hid himself behind its trunk, and peered out at his daughter's window (before which she stood), watching the arrangement of her long tresses, and doubtless fluctuating between the

thoughts suggested on the one hand by his tenacity of character, and on the other hand by his desire to embrace his child.

At this time the notary made his appearance.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Monsieur Cruchot?" said the miser, stepping from behind the tree.

"I have come to talk with you on business," replied Cruchot.

"Ha!" said Grandet, "you have some gold, I suppose, to give me for my crowns?"

"No," replied Cruchot, "I have not come to talk on money matters, but about your daughter. Perhaps you do not know it, but you and she are the town talk."

"What do I care for that?" said Grandet, "am I not master of my own house?"

"Certainly," said Cruchot, "you are the master, and you can if you please cut your own throat, or, what is worse, throw your own money out of the window."

"How do you mean?" asked Grandet.

"Your wife, my friend," said Cruchot, "is seriously ill, and you ought to consult Dr. Bergerin. Her life is in great danger, and if she should die for want of proper care and attention, you would feel very uncomfortably about it, I presume."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" said Grandet; "you know as well as I do what is the matter with my wife. And as for doctors, if they once get admission into a house, they will come five or six times a day."

"You can do as you like, Grandet, of course," said Cruchot; "but we are old friends, and there is no man in Saumur who takes a greater interest in your affairs than I do. I owed it to myself to say so much; and now, let what may happen, you are of age and know how to manage your own concerns. However, it is not business that brings me here, but something of, perhaps, more importance to you. You certainly have no wish to kill your wife, for she is very necessary to you; though you do not seem to be aware of it. Do you know how you would stand in regard to your daughter, if Madame Grandet should die? You would be responsible to her in law, for she could demand a division of your property, and order Froidfond to be sold — since she is her mother's heir, and you are not."

These words came upon Grandet like a thunderbolt; for he was not so well versed in law as in commerce. He had never thought of these facts.

"Therefore," continued Cruchot, after pausing a moment, "I advise you to treat her kindly."

"But do you know what she has done?" cried Grandet.

"What is it?" said Cruchot, anxious for once in his life to become a confidant of the miser, and to learn his version of the quarrel.

"She has given away her gold!" said Grandet.

"Well!" said Cruchot, "was it not her own?"

"They all say the same thing!" said the miser to himself, with a feeling of despair.

"Will you," pursued Cruchot, "for nothing, absolutely nothing, throw obstacles in the way of her concessions, which you will be compelled to solicit when her mother dies?"

"You call six thousand francs in gold nothing, do you?" said Grandet.

"Yes!" answered Cruchot. "Do you know what the inventory and division of your wife's property will cost you, if Eugenie insists on her rights?"

"What?"

"Twenty, thirty, fifty, yes! perhaps sixty thousand francs. Besides which, you will be compelled publicly to declare, under oath, the exact amount of your fortune, and pay enormous fees; while by an amicable arrangement between—"

"By my father's knife!" exclaimed Grandet, turning deadly pale, "we must see about this!" Then after pausing a moment in extreme agony, he continued: "Life is hard, Cruchot! it is full of trials. Will you swear to me," he added, solemnly, "that this is true? Is this the law! Let me see the law!"

"My dear friend," said Cruchot, pleasantly, "do you imagine that I am ignorant of my own trade?"

"It is too true, then!" said Grandet, bitterly; "I shall be despoiled, betrayed, murdered, devoured by my own daughter! What is the use of children? As for my dear wife, I love her; I am sure I love her tenderly; and luckily she has a strong constitution; she is a La Bertelliere; they all live to a good old age."

"Be assured, my friend," said Cruchot, "that she has not one month to live."

"What shall I do, then?" cried Grandet.

"Eugenie," answered Cruchot, "can renounce her right to succeed her mother—it is not, I presume, your intention to disinherit her from your own estate? But to obtain this renunciation, you must treat her kindly. And now, my friend, what I have told you, I have told you for your own good; it certainly is not for my interest to prevent liquidations, inventories, sales, divisions, and the like."

"Well," said Grandet, "we'll see, we'll see. Talk no more about it. Your words wring my very heart. Have you received any gold?"

"No," answered Cruchot, "but I have a handful or two of old louis, which I can sell you. Now, my friend, remember, make peace at once with Eugenie; all Saumur is ready to stone you for your conduct to her."

"I am very much obliged to them!" said Grandet.

"Besides," pursued Cruchot, "stocks are at 97*f*.75; do be satisfied for once in your life."

"How," said Grandet, "97*f*.75?"

"Yes."

"He! he! he! 97*f*.75; I thought so!" replied Grandet; and he accompanied Cruchot to the door, as the notary retired. But, too much agitated at what he had just heard to remain at home, he went up to his wife and said: "Mother, you can pass the whole day with Eugenie, if you wish; I am going to Froidfond. Be good to each other now. And, since this is the anniversary of our wedding-day, here are ten crowns for your *reposoir* for the festival of the Host; you have been wanting one a long while; so now treat yourself to one, and be happy, both of you, when I am away." And he threw the ten crowns on the bed, put his arm around his wife's neck, and kissed her forehead.

"How can you," said she, "think of receiving the merciful and pardoning God under your roof, while you are thus holding your daughter in a wicked restraint?"

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" replied Grandet, but in a pleasant tone, "we'll see about that, mother."

"Eugenie!" called the mother, aloud; "come in, my child; come and embrace your father; he forgives you."

But the old man had taken to his heels and was out of the house before Eugenie could get into her mother's room.

Old Grandet was now commencing his seventy-second year, and of late his avarice had increased, as in old age all the inveterate passions of man will increase. The sight and the possession of gold had grown to a monomania; and as his spirit of despotism grew in proportion to his avarice, the thought of surrendering the control of the least portion of his property on his wife's death appeared to him as a thing against nature. Then, to declare, under oath, the amount of his fortune! To inventory his chattels, real and personal—"I might as well cut my throat at once!" cried he, aloud, in the middle of an inclosure, where he was examining the state of his vines.

After spending a long time in the open air, revolving these things in his mind, he finally determined on his course, and returned to Saumur before dinner time. He resolved to bend before Eugenie, to cajole her, to coax her, to the end that when he died, he might die royally, holding to his last gasp the sole control of his millions.

At the moment when the old man was cautiously creeping upstairs, to go to his wife's room, Eugenie was holding Charles's beautiful dressing-case on her mother's bed. "It is," said she, looking at the likeness of Charles's mother, "his very mouth and forehead!" The door opened; the miser fastened his glance on the gold utensils, and Madame Grandet,

seeing her husband's countenance, cried out:

"Merciful Heaven, have pity on us!"

Grandet seized the box like a tiger. "What is it?" said he, taking it to the window. "Gold! good gold! and much of it, too! It weighs three or four pounds. Ah! ah! so Charles gave you this against your bright pieces. Well! why the devil did not you tell me so? You've made a good bargain, little girl! You are my daughter again. I acknowledge you. This *is* Charles's, isn't it?"

"Yes, father," replied Eugenie; "it is Charles's and not mine. It is left with me as a sacred deposit."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" answered Grandet; "he took your fortune, and now you must repair it."

"Father!" exclaimed Eugenie, in alarm.

The miser wanted his knife to wrench a plate of gold inlaid in the cover, and he placed the box on a chair. Eugenie rushed forward to regain it; but old Grandet, who had his eye on her and the box at the same time, stretched out his hand and repulsed her so harshly that she fell back on the bed.

"Husband!" shrieked Madame Grandet, rising in her bed.

Grandet had now got his knife, and prepared to wrench out the gold. Eugenie sprang forward, fell on her knees, and clasped her hands.

"Father!" she cried frantically, "in the name of the Saints, in the name of your eternal salvation, touch it not! It is neither yours nor mine! It belongs to an unfortunate relation who confided it to my care, and to whom I must restore it safely."

"Why, then, did you look at it?" said the miser, pausing a moment; "if it is given you in trust, why did you look at it? To look is worse than to handle."

"Do not destroy it!" screamed Eugenie; "you will dishonor me if you do!"

"Husband, hold your hand!" cried the distressed mother.

"Father! Father!" shrieked Eugenie, and her voice resounded through the house so than Nanon flew upstairs in affright and dashed into the room. She caught a sight of Madame Grandet, and perceived that she was fainting.

"Look there, sir!" she cried, as loudly as Eugenie had spoken; "see! my lady is dying!"

Grandet turned toward his wife. Then, instantly tossing away the box, he said, with great agitation, to Eugenie: "There, take it! We will not quarrel about a box! Nanon! quick! go for Dr. Bergerin! come, mother!" he continued, going to the bed; "it is nothing! I was only joking! It's all made up now; isn't it, my pet? There shall be no more bread and water! You shall eat just what you please. Ah! she opens her eyes! Mother! dear mother! sweet little mother! rouse yourself! look, see; I am hugging Eugenie! she loves her cousin; and she shall marry him, if she wants to! She shall keep the box. But don't die yet, for a long while, my poor dear little wife!"

"Oh, my husband!" gasped the poor woman, at length, "how can you abuse your wife and daughter?"

"I will never do so again!" cried the miser; "never! never! never! You shall see if I do, dear wife!" He flew into his laboratory, and returned in an instant with a handful of louis, which he scattered on the bed. "Here, Eugenie; here, wife!" he said; "these are for you. Come, smile, wife, and get well. You shall not want for anything; neither shall Eugenie. Here are a hundred louis for her; you won't give *them* away, Eugenie, will you?"

Madame Grandet and Eugenie, to whom the secret motive of this change in the miser's conduct was wholly unknown, looked at each other in silent, stupid amazement; at length, Eugenie said:

"Take back this money, father; we don't want it; we want only your kindness and love."

"Well, then," he replied, pocketing the gold even more rapidly than he had scattered it, "let us be good friends again. We will dine together every day and play loto every evening, at two sous a game; won't we, wife?"

"Alas! alas!" cried the dying wo-

man, "I should be most happy, but I am not able even to rise from my bed."

"Poor mother!" exclaimed the cooper; "you don't know how much I love you and Eugenie!" He then kissed his daughter and added, "How sweet it is to make up with one's daughter after a quarrel! Look, mother! We are all reconciled now. Go, Eugenie, and lock up that box. Go, my child. Don't fear anything. I will never speak of it to you again. Go, quick!"

Dr. Bergerin soon arrived; and, after a brief interview with the patient, informed Grandet that his wife was dangerously ill, but that entire quiet of mind, a careful diet, and the most patient nursing might protract her life till the autumn.

"Will it cost a great deal? Will much medicine be wanted?" demanded the miser.

"Little medicine and great care," replied the physician, who could not help smiling at the questions.

"Doctor," said Grandet, "I am sure you are an honorable man, and will take no advantage of me. I will confide in you. Come and see my wife as often as may be necessary. Preserve her life by all means—for indeed I am greatly attached to her, though I do not let the world see it; I like to keep my feelings and my business to myself. I have many troubles, doctor, and this is the heaviest of all. Sorrow entered my house when my brother died, and for him I am now expending enormous sums in Paris; there seems to be no end to it! Good-day, doctor; save my poor wife if you can, even though it cost a thousand francs, or—two thousand francs."

Notwithstanding the earnest wishes of Grandet for his wife's recovery—for her leaving Eugenie her heir and successor was worse to him than a thousand deaths, unless the daughter could be controlled; notwithstanding the kindness he now manifested on all occasions to his wife, accompanied by entire deference to his daughter; and notwithstanding the tender care and attention of Eugenie, Madame Grandet advanced gradually toward the grave.

Every day she grew weaker, and wasted away, until the month of October, when she gently breathed her last and ascended to heaven, regretting nothing here below but to leave the sweet companion of her joyless life, to whom her last looks seemed to predict a thousand woes. She trembled to leave this spotless lamb alone in a selfish world, with which she seemed so little fitted to contend.

"My dear child," said she at last, "there is no happiness but in heaven, and that you will one day acknowledge."

XXIV.

After her mother's death, Eugenie found new reasons for attaching herself to the house where she was born, where she had known so much sorrow, and where her mother had just died. She could not look at the window in the parlor and the high chair beside it, without shedding tears. At the same time she began to think that she had misjudged her father's character—he was now so kind and attentive to her. He gave her his arm when they descended to breakfast, and gazed at her with an almost parental affection; in fact, he watched over her as if she were made of gold.

Old Grandet, indeed, was so little like his former self, he humbled himself to such a degree before his daughter, that Nanon and the Cruchots attributed his conduct to the weakness of increasing age, and feared that he was losing his faculties. But on the day that the family went into mourning, when the dinner, to which Cruchot had been invited, was over, his motives began to appear.

"My dear child," said he to Eugenie, "you are your mother's heir, and we have a little business to transact together; is it not so, Cruchot?"

"It is," answered the notary.

"Is it necessary to do this business now, father?" said Eugenie.

"Yes, yes, child," replied the old man. "I can no longer endure the uncertainty

I am in; and I do not believe you wish to give me trouble!"

"Dear father!" exclaimed Eugenie, reproachfully.

"Well!" continued the miser, "we must arrange it to-night."

"What do you wish me to do?" inquired Eugenie.

"Oh, it is not what *I* wish you to do," answered the miser; "it is not my concern, but your own; explain this, Cruchot."

"Mademoiselle Grandet," began Cruchot, "your father does not wish to divide nor sell his property, nor pay enormous taxes on the ready money he may possess. Now to prevent this, it will be necessary to dispense with the inventory of all the property which this day remains undivided between you and your father."

"Cruchot," interposed Grandet, "are you sure of your law that you speak thus to a child?"

"Don't interrupt me," said Cruchot; "I will make it intelligible."

"No doubt, no doubt," replied Grandet; "certainly, neither you nor my daughter would wish to take any advantage of me."

"But what am I to do, Monsieur Cruchot?" said Eugenie.

"You must sign this instrument," said Cruchot, "by which you renounce your right to control your mother's fortune, and leave the joint property of your parents undivided, your father assuring to you the entire ownership hereafter."

"I don't understand a word you say," answered Eugenie; "give me the paper, and show me where I am to sign my name."

Meantime, Grandet looked alternately at the deed and at his daughter, and was so deeply agitated that drops of perspiration stood thick on his forehead.

"*Fifile,*" said he, "if instead of signing this, which will cost a great deal to register, you will simply and entirely renounce all right to the property of your poor deceased mother, and trust to me for the future, I would like it much better. I would, in that case, give you every month a good round income of a hundred francs, with which you can pay for as many masses as you please for those for whom you wish them to be said; what do you say? A hundred francs a month *in livres?*"

"I will do just what you prefer, father," said Eugenie.

"Mademoiselle Grandet," said the notary, "it is my duty to inform you that if you do this you will strip yourself of all—"

"What do I care for that?" said she, listlessly.

"Hold your tongue, Cruchot!" interposed the miser, taking his daughter's hand. "What is said, is said. You are an honest girl, Eugenie; you won't retract, will you?"

"Oh, no," answered the daughter.

The miser caught her in his arms, and embraced her till she was almost suffocated. "My child!" said he, "you give life to your father! You give him what he bestowed on you. We are even. This is the way business ought to be done. You may now do just what you please. To-morrow," he continued, turning to Cruchot, who was amazed at the scene, "to-morrow you will see that the act of renunciation is duly prepared at the register's office."

And, accordingly, the next day, at noon, the instrument was signed by which Eugenie accomplished her own spoliation.

At the end of the year, however, and in despite of his promise, the old miser had not given his daughter one sou of the hundred francs per month; and when Eugenie pleasantly reminded him of it, he could not help blushing. He went hastily to his cabinet, and presented to her one-third part of the jewels he had purchased from his nephew.

"Here, daughter," said he; "will you take these in place of your twelve hundred francs?"

"Father!" exclaimed the gratified girl, "will you really give them to me?"

He threw them into her lap, saying: "I will give you as many more next year; and thus," he added, rubbing his hands, "in a little time you will have

all *his* trinkets;" and he disappeared to chuckle over his speculation on his daughter's sensibility.

The old man was still robust, yet he now felt the necessity of initiating Eugenie into the secrets of his household. For two years, he made her give out, in his presence, the daily provisions for the family, and receive his rents, and taught her slowly and successively the names and capacity of his vineyards and farms; and finally, toward the close of the third year, he had so accustomed her to his avaricious ways, and had so firmly converted them into habits with her, that he gave up to her without fears the keys of his storeroom, and made her mistress of the house.

Five years passed away in entire monotony. The same routine of acts was daily performed with the regularity of a chronometer. Meantime, the habitual melancholy of Eugenie was a secret to no one; but its cause could be only matter of surmise, for no word or act of her own ever betrayed the story of her love. Her sole society consisted of the three Cruchots, and a few friends whom they had from time to time introduced, and after they had taught her to play whist, they came every evening to make up a game.

In the year 1825, her father, feeling the weight of his infirmities, was forced to initiate her into the secret of his territorial fortune, and he told her, in any case of difficulty, to refer to the notary Cruchot, in whose honesty he could confide.

Toward the close of this year, the old man, being now seventy-nine years of age, was attacked by a paralysis, and was soon after despaired of by Dr. Bergerin. Of a morning, he would have his chair rolled between the fireplace of his chamber and the door of his laboratory, which, doubtless, was full of gold. Here he would sit motionless, looking anxiously at those who came to see him, and then at the iron-plated door. He asked the cause of the least noise that took place in the house, and his sense of hearing was so acute, that he knew when the dog in the yard yawned.

On the days and hours that he had formerly been accustomed to receive his rents, he would arouse from his stupor, mechanically. He would then work about in his rolling armchair until it was close to the iron-door, make his daughter open it, watch her until she had placed the sacks of money in their secret places of deposit; and after she had finished and locked the door, he would take from her the precious key and put it in his pocket.

The notary, knowing that the rich heiress must needs marry his nephew, the president, in case Charles Grandet did not return, was indefatigable in kindness and attention. He came every day to see what he could do for Monsieur Grandet, went, at his request, to Froidfond, to his farms, to his vineyards, to his meadows, sold their produce, and transmitted the proceeds in gold and silver, which secretly went to join the treasure in the laboratory.

At length, the day of agony arrived, during which the strong frame of the old man wrestled with death. He sat by the fireside, before the iron-door, propped up in his chair by pillows. He drew toward him and wrapped himself in the coverlids and blankets, saying to Nanon:

"Lock them up; lock them up, so that they cannot steal them." And while he was able to use his eyes, where his life last concentrated itself, he turned them toward the iron-door, saying to Eugenie: "Are they there? are they there?"

"Yes, dear father," replied she, "they are all there."

"Watch over the gold, my child," he continued; "put gold before me; let me feel it." And Eugenie spread some louis on a little table and placed it within his reach. "Ah!" said he, "that warms me again!"

When the curate came to administer the last rites, he partially recovered his sight, and his eyes glistened as he beheld the cross, candlesticks, and basin of silver; he gazed earnestly at them, and his wen moved for the last time. As the priest placed the crucifix to his lips, that he might kiss the symbol of our redemption, he made a fearful gesture to seize it. The effort cost him his life. He called for

Eugenie, whom he could now no longer see, although she was kneeling beside him, and bathing his cold hand with her tears.

"Take care of all!" cried he, with a quivering voice; "you shall render a strict account to me *there!*" pointing upward, as if Christianity could be the religion of misers!

XXV.

Eugenie Grandet was now alone, having only Nanon on whom to rely, and with whom she could sympathize: Nanon, the only creature who loved her for herself, and to whom she could freely talk over her sorrows.

In due time, Cruchot informed her that she had from her lands an income of four hundred thousand francs; from stocks, two hundred and fifty thousand francs; three millions in gold, and one hundred thousand francs in crowns. His estimate of her whole property was about twenty millions.

"Oh!" said Eugenie to herself, "*where is Charles?*"

The day on which Cruchot placed in her hands the title deeds and certificates of her inheritance, now clear from encumbrance and embarrassment, Eugenie remained alone with Nanon. They were seated one on each side of the old fireplace—in that old parlor where everything was a memento, from her mother's chair to the glass from which her cousin had drank.

"Nanon," said she, "we are alone."

"Yes, mademoiselle," replied the servant, "and if I only knew where that dear young man was to be found, I would go after him on foot."

"The sea is between us," said Eugenie.

And while the poor heiress was weeping with her faithful old servant in that cold and dismal house, nothing was talked of from Nantes to Orleans but the twenty millions of Mademoiselle Grandet.

One of Eugenie's first acts was to secure an annuity of twelve hundred francs to Nanon, who, already possessing an income of six hundred francs from her own property, became a desirable match. In less than a month she passed from the state of a spinster to that of a wife, under the protection of Anthony Cornoiller, who was appointed overseer-general of Froidfond.

Madame Cornoiller had a great advantage over her contemporaries; for, although she was sixty-three years old, she did not seem to be a day more than forty. Her coarse features had resisted the attacks of time, and owing to the regimen of her monastic life, she bore a ruddy complexion that defied old age.

When she left the house to repair to the church, Nanon, who belonged to the whole neighborhood, received sincere congratulations through the whole street.

Eugenie gave her, as a wedding present, two dozen of tablecloths, and a service of napkins, plates, knives, forks, etc., for two dozen people. Cornoiller, surprised at such magnificence, thanked his young mistress with tears in his eyes, and would readily have exposed his life for her. Nanon, now become Eugenie's housekeeper—had at last a store-room to open, and provisions to give out; moreover, she had charge of two servants, a cook and a chambermaid, who, under her superintendence, became real jewels.

Eugenie was thirty years old; and, save the few bright days when her cousin first arrived from Paris, she had known nothing of the felicities of life. Her colorless and mournful childhood had passed away by the side of a mother whose heart, unappreciated and wounded, was a constant prey to grief. Eugenie's first and only love was a principal of melancholy; for a brief time, she had a glimpse of her lover, she had surrendered to him her heart between two kisses stealthily given and taken, and then he had left her and placed the world between them. This love, cursed by her father, had been in part the cause of her mother's death, and occasioned her a permanent sorrow mingled with frail hopes. Thus, until now, she had pressed forward in the pursuit of happiness, losing her own strength

THE BIG NANON.

"Her name had been associated with the Grandet family for thirty-five years."

and gaining none in return. In the moral as in the physical life there is an aspiration and a respiration; the soul requires to absorb the sentiments of another soul, to assimilate itself with that other, and to return the sentiments again with accumulated fondness. Without this beautiful phenomenon, there would be no life for the heart; it would lack air, faint and die.

Eugenie began to faint; for to her, wealth was neither power nor consolation. She could exist only by love, by religion, by hope. Love explained to her the mystery of eternity; her heart and her Bible pointed out to her two worlds of futurity. Night and day she dwelt on these two infinities — which indeed were for her blended in one. She retired within herself, loving and thinking she was beloved. For seven years the passion had pervaded her whole being; her fortune was not the twenty millions of inheritance; but the dressing-case, the two miniatures, her aunt's golden thimble, and the jewels Charles had sold to her father.

As the people of Saumur did not think it probable that Mademoiselle Grandet would marry while in mourning for her father, the aspirant for her hand wisely confined his attentions to the offices of friendship. Every evening her parlor was filled with a society composed of the president's partisans, who sung the praises of the young lady on every key. She had her physician in ordinary, her grand almoner, her chamberlain, her tire-woman, her prime minister, and especially her chancellor—a chancellor who desired to tell her all things; had she wished for a train-bearer, one could doubtless have been procured. She was a queen, and the most skillfully adulated of queens. Flattery never emanates from great minds—it is the prerogative of small ones, which even reduce their own diminutive proportions, the better to enter into the sphere of the person around whom they gravitate. Flattery presupposes its object to be interested. And the people who nightly filled the parlor of Mademoiselle Grandet, whom they now styled Mademoiselle de Froidfond—succeeded marvelously in overwhelming her with panegyric. This concert of praise, new to Eugenie, made her blush at first; but eventually her ear became so accustomed to hear her beauty lauded, that an opposite opinion from any source would have affected her much more sensibly than it could have done eight years before, and she finished by liking the homage, which, however, she never appropriated to her own vanity, but always laid in secret at the foot of her heart's idol.

The President de Bonfons was the hero of this little circle, where, in turn, his wit, his learning, his person, his affability, became the constant theme. One observed of him that within seven years he had greatly augmented his fortune; that he was worth at least ten thousand francs a year, and that his land lay between the several domains of the heiress. "Do you know, Mdlle. Grandet," said another, "that the Cruchot family have among them forty thousand livres a year?" "Yes," added a third, Mdlle. de Gribeaucourt, "and then all their savings are to be added. A gentleman from Paris came here lately to offer M. Cruchot two hundred thousand francs for his office; and he will sell it, too, if he gets appointed *juge de paix*." "He wishes to succeed M. de Bonfons in the presidency of the Tribunal," said Madame d'Orsonval, "for the president will become councilor; he has too many resources not to succeed."

Meanwhile, the president did his best to second these representations and recommendations. Despite his real age of forty, and his apparent age of a much greater number of years—for almost all judges grow prematurely old in their faces—he dressed like a young man, sported a rattan, never took snuff in presence of Mdlle. de Froidfond, wore a white cravat and a broad plated ruffle—all of which gave him a family resemblance to the genus turkey. He spoke, also, in a familiar tone to the heiress, and styled her "our dear Eugenie."

In short, excepting the increased number of visitors, the substitution of whist for loto, and the absence of the miser and his wife, the scene with which this portion

of Eugenie's history commences was similar to that of past days. The pack still pursued her and her millions; but being now more numerous and less restrained, they barked louder and hemmed in their prey more closely. If Charles had dropped in from India, he would have encountered the same personages and the same interests as before; for Madame des Grassins, toward whom Eugenie was perfect in courtesy and kindness, still persisted in tormenting the Cruchots. And now, as then, the form of her cousin would have stood prominent in the scene; now, as formerly, he would have been sovereign there.

Nevertheless, some change had occurred. The bouquet formerly presented to Eugenie by the president on her birthday only, became now a daily instead of an annual gift. Every evening he brought to the heiress a magnificent nosegay, which Madame Cornoiller ostentatiously placed in a flower jar at the time and threw away as soon as the guests departed.

In the beginning of the spring, Madame des Grassins essayed to disturb the jealousy of the Cruchots, by speaking to Eugenie of the Marquis de Froidfond, whose ruined family and title might be restored to their original grandeur, if the heiress would restore to him his estates in a marriage contract. The banker's lady rang changes on the peerage, the court, the title of marchioness; and, mistaking Eugenie's smile of disdain for one of approbation, she took the trouble to announce as "by authority," that the president's marriage was not quite so near a consummation as some people supposed.

"Although," said she, "Monsieur de Froidfond is fifty years of age, he does not appear to be a day older than the president; true, he is a widower and has children; but he is a marquis, and will be a peer of France, and in times like these such matches are not often to be met with. I am sure, of my own knowledge, that when Father Grandet united all his other estates to the domains of Froidfond, he intended to graft himself on the Froidfonds; he often told me as much."

"How comes it, Nanon," said Eugenie, one night, as she was going to bed, "that *he* has not written me once during seven whole years?"

XXVI.

We return, now, to Charles, who during these years had been making his fortune in India. After dwelling for a time in that country, he parted with a variety of mistaken notions and prejudices; and found that the surest way of making a fortune, whether in the tropics or in Europe, was to buy and sell human beings. He went, therefore, to the coast of Africa, trafficked in negroes, and joined to this trade in men, ventures of such merchandise as was best adapted to those markets where his interest took him. He led a life of entire activity, and was actuated solely by the hope of reappearing in Paris with the *éclat* of a millionaire, and reinstating himself in the brilliant position whence he had fallen.

After a long intercourse with foreign nations, his whole system of thought underwent a change and he became a skeptic. He had no longer any fixed notions of right and wrong, when he came to see that what was punished as a crime in one country was regarded as a proud virtue in another; and by the perpetual contact of self-interest and the interest of others, his heart grew cold, contracted and dried up.

The blood of the Grandets at length asserted its dominion in him; he became avaricious and cruel. He sold Chinese, Africans, swallow-nests, children, and curiosities. He exacted usury on a large scale, and becoming successful in defrauding the customs, he was soon unscrupulous as to the rights of individual men. And at last he made voyages to Saint Thomas, to purchase at a low price the merchandise brought there by pirates.

If the love of Eugenie accompanied him on his first voyage, like the image of the Virgin that the Spaniards place and worship in their vessels, and if Charles at-

tributed his first good fortune to its magic influence, at a later day, his dissipations and his adventures in all countries effaced from his remembrance his cousin of Saumur, the moss-grown bench under the walnut-tree, and the stolen kiss in the passageway.

He, indeed, remembered the little garden of his uncle, because there his own career in trial commenced; but he disowned the family of the miser. The old man was a cur who had filched his trinkets from him; and though Eugenie occupied a corner in his thoughts, it was only as a *creditor* to whom he owed six thousand francs.

Hence arose the long silence of Charles Grandet, who, in India, at St. Thomas, in Lisbon, in the United States, and on the coast of Africa, had gone under the assumed name of *Chippart*, so that his own might remain unsullied. And thus he could, without fear of being known, prove himself everywhere indefatigable, audacious, grasping, and, like a man resolved to make his fortune *quibuscumque viis*, hastened to accomplish it even through infamy, so as to remain an honest man for the remainder of his days.

His success was proportionate to his energy; and early in the year 1826 he arrived at Bordeaux, in the ship *Mary Caroline*, with three casks of gold-dust, valued at one million, six hundred thousand francs, on which he expected to gain some seven or eight per cent by having it coined in Paris.

In the same vessel came a passenger, a gentleman in ordinary of his Majesty Charles X., a Monsieur d'Aubrion, a good old man who had committed the folly of marrying a fashionable woman. His fortune was in the West Indies; and, in order to repair his losses made by the prodigality of his wife, he had gone out there to dispose of it. Monsieur and Madame d'Aubrion, of the house of Aubrion-de-Busch, whose last Captal died in 1789, found themselves reduced to some twenty thousand livres a year. They had a very plain daughter whom the mother was endeavoring to marry off without a portion, her own fortune being barely sufficient to maintain the family in Paris; an enterprise the success of which was considered very doubtful, notwithstanding Madame d'Aubrion's brilliant diplomacy. Indeed, the lady herself almost despaired, when she looked at her daughter, unless by good luck she could fall in with some man positively crazy for an alliance with nobility.

Mademoiselle d'Aubrion was as long as a devil's darning-needle, thin and lank; her mouth was supercilious and overhung by a nose entirely too long, thick at the end, yellow when quiescent, and as red as a beet after dinner—a kind of vegetable phenomenon more disagreeable in the midst of a pale, vapid face, than elsewhere. She was, in short, just the daughter that a wife of eight-and-thirty, still handsome and expecting attention from the opposite sex, would desire. But, to counterbalance these disadvantages, the Marchioness d'Aubrion had imparted to her daughter an air *tres distingue;* had subjected her to a regimen which, provisionally, kept her nose at a reasonable hue; taught her the art of dressing with taste and originality; endowed her with polished manners, and initiated her into the mysteries of those soft, melancholy looks, so bewitching to man. She had also taught her the true maneuver of the foot—to push it forth that its smallness might be admired just when the nose showed its colors; in a word, she had made the most of her daughter.

Charles attached himself very closely to Madame d'Aubrion, which was precisely what Madame d'Aubrion desired; and it was thought, on board the vessel, that she neglected no opportunity during the voyage to captivate so rich a son-in-law. The ship arrived at Bordeaux in June; and the D'Aubrions, with Charles, took lodgings at the same hotel, and set out together for Paris. The residence of the marquis was burdened with mortgages, but Monsieur Charles Grandet was to liberate it. The mother had already spoken to him of the happiness she should feel in giving up her *rez-de-chaussée* to her daughter on her marriage. Not participating in her hus-

band's prejudices on the score of birth, she had promised to obtain—in the event of the marriage—for Charles Grandet from the good King Charles X., a royal ordinance, authorizing him (Grandet) to take the name and arms of D'Aubrion; and, on condition of his settling a *majorate* of twenty-four thousand francs a year on the Marquis d'Aubrion, to bear the title of Captal-de-Busch, Marquis d'Aubrion, Count de Rochegourd, etc. By uniting the fortunes of the two families, living with a mutual good understanding, and taking sinecures into the account, they could bring together to the Hotel d'Aubrion a hundred and some thousand livres a year.

"And when people have a hundred thousand livres a year, a name and family," said Madame d'Aubrion, "and when they go to court—for I will get you named *gentilhomme honoraire* of the chamber—they can do as they please. You may be, at your choice, master of requests to the Council of State, prefect, secretary of embassy, or embassador; for the king is very fond of Monsieur d'Aubrion; they have been friends from infancy."

Intoxicated with ambition, Charles entertained with delight, during the voyage, the honors proffered to him by a skillful hand and under the guise of reciprocal confidence. And now, presuming that his father's affairs had been settled by his uncle, he saw himself lodged in the Faubourg St. Germain, where everybody desired to dwell, and where, under the shadow of Mademoiselle Matilda's red nose, he was to make his appearance as the Count d'Aubrion, as the Chabots were one day to make their entrée as Rohans.

Dazzled by the prosperity of the Restoration, which, at his departure, was in a tottering state, and filled with the splendor of aristocratic conceits, his intoxication, begun on ship-board, was kept up at Paris, and he resolved to grasp the bait held out to him by the marchioness.

Here, too, he met Annette; who, like a woman of the world, advised her old friend to contract this alliance, and promised him her influence in all his ambitious schemes.

In person, Charles had become much more attractive during his absence. His complexion had grown brown, and his manners were decided, like those of a man accustomed to overcome all obstacles, to domineer, to command.

When Monsieur des Grassins heard of his return, his fortune, and his intended marriage, he called on him to arrange for the payment of the two hundred thousand francs requisite to settle his father's affairs. He found Charles in consultation with the jeweler from whom he had ordered settings for the jewels for Mademoiselle d'Aubrion's *corbeille*, and who was now showing him the most *recherche* designs. Charles had brought with him from India a collection of magnificent diamonds; yet the designs, the gold and silver, and the workmanship of his intended present would cost him more than a hundred thousand francs.

He received Monsieur des Grassins, whom he did not recognize, with the impertinent incivility of a young man *a la mode*, who, in India, had killed four men in the same number of duels. Charles listened coolly to the banker; and replied, without having altogether understood his meaning.

"I have no concern with my father's affairs. I am obliged to you, sir, for the trouble you have given yourself, but I cannot avail myself of your good offices. I have accumulated, it is true, a few hundred thousand francs by the sweat of my face; but I have not gained them to throw at the heads of my father's creditors."

"Suppose, sir," said Monsieur des Grassins, "that in a few days your father should be declared a bankrupt?"

"In a few days," answered Charles, "I shall be the Count d'Aubrion; so you can understand that such declaration would be to me a matter of perfect indifference. Besides, sir, you know as well as I, that when a man has a hundred thousand livres a year, his father can never have been a bankrupt." And he politely bowed Monsieur des Grassins to the door.

XXVII.

ONE day, early in the month of August of this year, Eugenie was seated on the little wooden bench where her cousin had sworn eternal love for her, and where she now usually breakfasted in fine weather. It was a cool, delicious morning, and she was revolving in her mind all the great and little events of her love and the trials that followed and accompanied it. The sun shone brightly on the old wall, now almost falling to pieces, but which, however, she would not suffer Cornoiller to repair, though the man had often told his wife that it would fall and crush them some day.

At this moment the post-boy knocked at the door, and handed Nanon a letter. The old servant hurried into the garden shouting, "A letter, a letter, Mademoiselle Eugenie!" then putting it in her mistress's hands, she demanded, "Is it the one you expected?"

"Paris!" exclaimed Eugenie, trembling from head to foot; "it is from him! He has returned!"

The color forsook her cheeks, and for a minute she held the letter unopened in her hand. Nanon, meanwhile, stood still in eager expectancy, and joy seemed to escape, like smoke through the cracks, from her sunburned face.

"Read it, Mademoiselle Eugenie, read it," cried Nanon, impatiently.

"Ah, Nanon!" murmured Eugenie, "why does he return by Paris when he went away by Saumur?"

"Read it, read it! You'll find out!" reiterated Nanon.

Eugenie opened the letter at length. A check on the house of *Mesdames des Grassins & Corret,* of Saumur, fell out from it. Nanon picked it up.

"My dear cousin," began Eugenie to read.

"Alas!" thought she, "I am *Eugenie* no longer," and her heart almost ceased to beat. She folded her arms, and the big tears stood in her eyes.

"Is he dead?" asked Nanon.

"If he were, he could not have written," replied Eugenie, faintly.

After many efforts she read the letter through. It was in these words:

"MY DEAR COUSIN—I am sure you will rejoice to hear of my success in my late enterprise. You brought me good luck; and I have returned rich, as I was advised to do by my uncle, whose death, as well as my aunt's, I have just learned through Monsieur des Grassins. The death of our parents is only the course of nature, and we ought to succeed them. I hope you are now consoled for their loss, as nothing resists the soothing influence of time. I know this from experience. Yes, my dear cousin!

"Unfortunately for myself, the day of illusion is past. How could it be otherwise! In traveling through the world, I have reflected on life; and although I went abroad a boy, I have returned a man; and I now think of many things that then never entered my imagination. You are free, cousin; and, as yet, so am I.

"There is apparently nothing to prevent the realization of our projects; but I have too much honor to conceal from you the state of my affairs. I have not forgotten that I do not belong to myself. In all my wearisome journeys I have remembered the little wooden bench—"

Eugenie started up, as if she had been seated on burning coals and placed herself on one of the steps of the gate.

"The little wooden bench, where we swore to love each other forever, the passageway, the gray parlor, my garret-room, and the night when by your delicate kindness you illuminated my prospects for the future. These recollections have sustained my courage, and I said to myself, you have always thought of me (as I often thought of you) at the hour agreed upon between us. Have you watched the clouds at nine o'clock? I know you have! therefore, I will not betray a friendship so sacred to me. No! I ought not to deceive you.

"There is, at this moment, an alliance in contemplation for me, which satisfies

all the expectations I have formed in regard to marriage. Love, in marriage, is certainly a chimera, and my experience tells me we are bound to obey all the laws of society, and unite all the compatibilities required by the world, when we enter into that state. Now, there exists between you and me a disparity of age which, perhaps, my dear cousin, would influence your happiness more than mine. I do not speak to you of your manners and your education and your habits, which are in no wise suited to a life in Paris, and which, doubtless, would not tally with my ulterior purposes. It is my intention to maintain a sumptuous establishment, to receive a great deal of company; and I think I recollect that you prefer a retired and quiet life.

"But I will be still more candid with you. I will make you the arbiter of my life. I am now worth sixty thousand livres a year. This fortune permits me to unite myself with the D'Aubrion family, whose heiress, a young person of eighteen, will bring me in marriage her name, her title, a post of honor in his majesty's chamber, and one of the most brilliant positions in Parisian society.

"I confess to you, my dear cousin, that I have not the slightest affection for Mademoiselle d'Aubrion; but, by an alliance with her, I secure to my children a social situation, the benefits of which will one day be incalculable; for monarchial sentiments are constantly gaining ground. Therefore, in future years, my son, who will be the Marquis d'Aubrion, with a *majorat* of thirty thousand livres a year, can choose what place he likes best under the government. We owe *ourselves* to our children; and thus, you see, my dear cousin, with what good faith I reveal to you the secrets of my heart, my expectations, and my fortune.

"It is possible that you have forgotten our childish talk of seven years ago; but I have forgotten neither your kindness nor my promises. I remember them all, even those that were most lightly given, and which a young man less conscientious than I am, with a heart less young and honest, would never think of again. In telling you that I contemplate a *mariage de convenance*, and that I still remember our childish loves, do I not put myself entirely in your hands, and render you the mistress of my fate, and say to you that if I must renounce my ambitious views, I will voluntarily content myself with the pure and simple happiness of which you have offered me such touching images?"

"Tan, ta! ta! Tan, ta, ti! Tinn, ta, ta!—Toun!—Toun, ta, ti!—Tinn, ta, ta!" etc.—thus sung Charles Grandet, to the air of *nom piu andrai*, as, in conclusion of the foregoing epistle, he signed:

"Your devoted cousin, CHARLES.

"P. S.—I add to my letter a check on the house of Des Grassins for eight thousand one hundred francs, to your order, payable in gold, which includes the principal and interest of the sum you had the kindness to lend me. I am expecting a case from Bordeaux, containing some objects of curiosity, which you will permit me to offer you, as a testimonial of my lasting gratitude. You can return my dressing-case to me by the diligence, addressed to Monsieur Grandet, Hotel d'Aubrion, Rue Hillerin-Bertin."

"Return *by the diligence* a box for which I would have given my life a thousand times over!" cried Eugenie.

XXVIII.

WHAT a dreadful and entire shipwreck! The vessel went down without leaving a rope or a plank floating on the vast ocean of her hopes!

Many women, when they find themselves abandoned, tear their rivals from their lovers' arms, kill them, and fly to the end of the world, the scaffold, or the grave. This, no doubt, is a very fine climax; the mainspring of such noble crime is a sublime passion which overawes justice.

Other women, in such a case, bend their heads and suffer in silence; they hold on their way, resigned and dying, weeping and forgiving, praying and remembering, until their latest breath. *This* is love; true love; the love of angels; a noble love, which lives on its grief and dies of it. Such was Eugenie's feeling, after she had read this horrible letter. She looked up to heaven, and thought of the last words of her mother, who, as dying persons sometimes do, had cast a penetrating look into the future; then, recalling the details of her mother's death-bed scene and its prophecy, she read her destiny at a glance. Nothing remained for her but to spread her wings toward the sky and live in prayer till the day of her deliverance.

"My mother was right!" said she; "let me suffer and die!"

She walked with a slow pace into the parlor, and, contrary to her custom, avoided the passageway. But she found the old gray parlor full of mementos of her cousin; even the mantel-piece was full, for there stood a particular saucer and an old Sevres sugar dish that she had used at breakfast every day for more than seven years.

This morning was destined to be a solemn and eventful one. Nanon announced the curate of the parish.

This man, a relative of the Cruchots, was in the interest of the president, and a day or two previously had been instructed by the old abbé to address Mdlle. Grandet, in a sense purely religious, on her obligations to enter the marriage state. As she saw him come in, Eugenie supposed that he had called for the five hundred francs, which she gave monthly to the poor, and bade Nanon to bring them; but the curate smiling, said:

"To-day, Mdlle. Grandet, I came to speak to you about a poor maiden, in whom all Saumur is interested, and who, for want of charity to herself, does not live in a Christian manner."

"My dear sir," replied Eugenie, "you come at a time when it is impossible for me to give a thought to my neighbors. I am absorbed in my own affairs. I am very wretched, and have no refuge but the Church; her bosom is large enough to contain all our sorrows; and her tenderness so abundant that we may draw from it largely without fear of exhausting it."

"Mdlle. Grandet," pursued the curate, "in interesting ourselves about this poor maiden, we shall even interest ourselves about you. Listen. If you wish to secure your salvation, you have but two courses open for your choice; leave the world, or conform to its usages. Fulfill your earthly destiny, or your heavenly one."

"Oh, sir!" replied Eugenie, "I am in great want of counsel and assistance, and God has sent you to me. I will leave the world at once and live in silence and retirement for God alone."

"Daughter," said the curate, "you must reflect before you adopt so violent a measure; marriage is a sacrament; the veil is death."

"Well, then, death be it! speedy death!" she answered, with an earnestness that startled the curate.

"Death!" he echoed in astonishment. "Consider, Mdlle. Grandet, you have high duties toward society to fulfill. Are you not a mother to the poor, to whom you give food and clothing in winter, and employment in summer? Your large fortune is but a loan, which you must restore, and thus far you have holily accepted it as such; but to bury yourself in a convent would be only selfishness. At the same time you ought not to remain unmarried; for in the first place, even if you were capable of managing your immense property, you would perhaps lose it all; you would have a thousaud lawsuits and be exposed to inextricable difficulties. Believe your pastor; a husband is essential to your interests, for it is your duty to preserve what God has bestowed upon you. I speak to you as to a precious lamb of the fold. Your love to God is too sincere and deep-rooted to suffer you to barter your hopes of salvation for the pleasures of a world of which you are one of the brightest ornaments, and to which you give a sacred example."

Just at this period of the conversation,

Madame des Grassins entered, impelled by revenge and a reviving hope.

"Good-morning, Mademoiselle Grandet," said she; "ah! our worthy curate is with you. I will call again. I have some business with you, but I see you are engaged."

"Madame," interposed the curate, "I will not disappoint you by remaining. I will myself take another opportunity to see Mademoiselle Grandet."

"I beg, sir, that you will return soon," said Eugenie, "I need your support and counsel."

"That you do, my poor child!" said Madame des Grassins.

"How, madame! What do you refer to?" inquired Eugenie and the curate in the same breath.

"Alas!" cried Madame des Grassins, "do I not know of your cousin's return, and approaching marriage with Mademoiselle d'Aubrion? A woman, you know, never keeps her wits in her pocket."

Eugenie blushed and was silent for an instant—and during that instant she resolved for the future to command her countenance, as her father did his, that it might not betray her feelings. She then turned to the banker's lady, saying, ironically, "Doubtless, madame, my wits are in my pockets, for I do not understand the purpose of your commiseration. You may speak freely before this gentleman; he is my confessor."

"I came," said the lady, "to show you this letter from my husband. Will you read it?"

Eugenie read as follows:

"My dear Wife—Monsieur Charles Grandet has returned from India, and has been in Paris for a month or more—"

"A month!" said Eugenie to herself.

—"I was obliged to dance attendance twice on this future Count d'Aubrion before I could obtain an interview. All Paris rings with his marriage, and the bans are published—"

"Then," thought Eugenie, "he wrote to me at the very time when—" but she did not finish her sentence, nor exclaim, "*le polisson!*" as a Parisian woman would have done; but her scorn was not the less deep for being unexpressed.

—"This marriage," continued the letter, "is, however, far from being a settled thing, for the marquis refuses to give his daughter to the son of a bankrupt. I called to inform him of what his uncle and I had done in relation to his father's estate, and of the maneuvers by which, until now, we had kept the creditors quiet. But the puppy had the impudence to tell me—me, who for five years have devoted myself night and day to his interests and his honor—that *he had no concern about his father's affairs!* Now, a receiver would have a legal right to demand from him some thirty or forty thousand francs for fees, and one per cent on the amount of the debts. But soft! there are still two millions lawfully due to the creditors, and I am resolved at once to declare his father a bankrupt. I embarked in this affair on the faith of that old crocodile, Felix Grandet, and I have made certain promises in the name of that family; now, though the would-be Count d'Aubrion cares nothing for his own honor, mine is of some consequence to me; I shall therefore explain my position to the creditors. Nevertheless, I have too much respect for Mademoiselle Eugenie—with whom, in happier days, we had hoped to be allied—to proceed in this matter until you have spoken to her—"

Eugenie read no further, but returned the letter to Madame des Grassins, saying, coldly, "*We shall see about it.*"

"You speak," replied the lady, "in the exact tone of your deceased father."

"Madame," said Nanon, "we have a draft on you for eight thousand francs in gold."

"That's very true," replied Madame des Grassins; "will you come with me to get it?"

And she withdrew, followed by Nanon and the curate.

———

XXIX.

EUGENIE ascended to her father's cabinet, where she passed the whole day alone, without coming down to dinner. In the evening, however, she appeared in the parlor to receive her visitors, who, on this occasion, came in unusual numbers. The news of Charles's return, and his silly infidelity, had spread through the town; and all were anxious to witness the effect on the heiress. But their curiosity was disappointed. Eugenie suffered not a trace of her cruel suffering to appear on her placid countenance; she even smiled, as in surprise, at those who wished to testify their sympathy by sad looks or words.

About nine o'clock the tables broke up, the players left their seats, and severally discussed the last game of whist, as they joined the circle of talkers. And when they moved to depart, a theatrical surprise came upon them, which resounded through all Saumur, the arrondissement, and the four adjacent prefectures.

Eugenie said, in a voice to be heard by all:

"I wish you would remain a few minutes, Monsieur de Bonfons."

Every person was thunderstruck at these words, and the president himself turned pale; but the parlor was soon cleared of all but De Bonfons and Eugenie.

"The president will get the twenty millions!" said Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt, when the guests were all in the street.

"It is plain," said Madame d'Orsonval, "that he is to marry Mademoiselle Grandet.

"He holds the ace of trumps," said the abbé.

In short, every one had his say, and made his pun. It was considered a clear case that Mdlle. Grandet's requesting the president to remain was a virtual announcement of her intention to take him for a husband. In country towns, the rules of strict propriety are so rigidly observed, that an infraction of this kind was of very ominous portent.

"M. de Bonfons," said Eugenie, firmly, though her tone was slightly agitated, "I am aware of your intentions and motives; you seek my hand, and you covet my fortune. My peculiar situation requires me in part to accede to your wishes; and I now promise you my hand, on certain conditions."

"I will yield to any conditions," interrupted the president.

But Eugenie proceeded without noting the interruption.

"If," said she, "you will swear to leave me the sole mistress of my liberty and conduct, without claiming, under any circumstances, any one of the rights or duties of the marriage state, my hand is yours. Hold!" she continued, seeing him about to fall at her feet; "I have not said it all. I do not wish to deceive you. I have in my heart an inextinguishable love for another, and friendship is all I can bestow on a husband. Besides, I have a great service to require, as a final condition."

"I will perform it," replied the president, "be it what it may."

"Here," said Eugenie, holding in her hand certain papers, "are two million and some hundred thousand francs. You must set out for Paris this instant. Go to Monsieur des Grassins, find out my uncle's creditors, collect them together, pay them their entire claims, principal and interest, from their maturity until the day you cancel them, and be careful to have your receipts drawn and acknowledged in due form. You are a lawyer, and I confide this solely to you. You are, besides, an honest and sensible man; and on the faith of your solemn promise, and under the shelter of your name, I will embark, to weather as I may, the storms of life. We have known one another so long that we are already almost relatives, and I think you will have no desire to render me unhappy."

"I will be your devoted slave," cried the president, throwing himself at her feet in great agitation.

"When you have obtained the receipts, sir," continued Eugenie, coldly, "you will take them, with all the vouchers, and this

letter, to Monsieur Charles Grandet. On your return to Saumur, you may expect me to fulfill my promise."

The president had sense enough to see that he owed Mademoiselle Grandet's promise to her disappointment; he therefore hastened to execute her orders with the greatest promptitude, lest by some mischance the lovers should in the meantime become reconciled.

As soon as he was gone, Eugenie sank into a chair and burst into tears. All was over.

The president traveled fast, and was in Paris the next evening; and in the morning following he called on Monsieur des Grassins. The banker brought the creditors together in the notary's office, where the claims were all deposited. There Monsieur de Bonfons, in the name of the family of Grandet, paid the entire amount of the debts, and interest—an event regarded in the commercial circles of Paris as one of the most astonishing of the age.

When the discharge was registered, and Monsieur des Grassins remunerated for his trouble by a gift of fifty thousand francs, the president repaired to the Hotel d'Aubrion, and found Charles just returning to his own apartments, in a dejected mood, from an interview with his intended father-in-law. The old marquis had declared to him that he would not give him his daughter till all the creditors of Monsieur William Grandet were satisfied. The president handed to Charles the following letter:

"My Cousin—The President de Bonfons is commissioned to place in your hands the discharge of all the debts due by my uncle. I heard that a declaration of bankruptcy had been threatened, and it occurred to me that the son of a baukrupt might not be allowed to marry Mademoiselle d'Aubrion. You have judged rightly of my mind and manners; I know nothing of the world, its requirements, nor its customs; nor could I expect to promote your comfort or welfare with my inability to conform to them. I wish you all happiness in the enjoyment of your social views, to which you have sacrificed our former love; and I have now done what was in my power to promote that happiness by restoring to you your father's honor unimpaired. Adieu. You will always find a faithful friend in your cousin,

"Eugenie G."

The president smiled at the exclamation which the ambitious young man could not repress when he ascertained his good fortune; and he said to Charles:

"We can now announce each other's marriage reciprocally."

"Ah," said Charles, "you are going to marry Eugenie, then? I am glad of it. She is a good girl. But," continued he, struck with an idea that had never before occurred to him—for he left France ignorant of the miser's real situation—"she must be rich?"

"Four days ago," replied the president, with a bantering triumph that he could not repress, "she was worth twenty-one millions; since paying your father's debts, she has but nineteen."

Charles stared at De Bonfons with a look of absolute stupefaction.

"Nine — teen — mill"—he began to stammer.

"Yes," interrupted De Bonfons, "nineteen millions of francs. Mademoiselle Grandet and myself will possess at our marriage an income of eight hundred thousand livres."

"My dear cousin," replied Charles, briskly, and somewhat recovering his self-possession, "we can be of great assistance to each other."

"I am glad of it," answered De Bonfons. "By the way," he continued, "here is a little box that I was charged to deliver to you;" and he placed Charles's dressing-case on the table.

XXX.

"My dear Charles," said the Marchioness d'Aubrion, entering at the moment, and taking no heed of the president, "you must not trouble yourself about what my poor old husband has said;

his head is turned by the Duchess de Margency. I repeat to you that nothing shall interfere with your marriage."

"Nothing can, now, madame," replied Charles. "The remainder of the three millions formerly owed by my father was all paid yesterday."

"In money?" asked the astonished lady.

"In money, both principal and interest," answered Charles.

"What folly!" exclamed the marchioness; then, perceiving the president, she whispered, "who is this person?"

"My man of business," he answered, in the same tone.

The lady bowed disdainfully to De Bonfons, and left the room.

"We have been of assistance to each other already," said the president, taking up his hat; "good-by, cousin!"

"I believe, on my soul!" cried Charles, as De Bonfons disappeared, "that Kakatoo of Saumur is making game of me. I've a great mind to give him six inches of steel between his ribs."

Three days after his return to Saumur, Monsieur de Bonfons published his marriage with Mademoiselle Grandet; and six months thereafter he was appointed councilor to the royal court of Angers.

Before Eugenie removed from Saumur, she caused the jewels that she once prized so highly to be melted and converted (together with the sum returned by Charles) into a crucifix of gold, which she presented to the church where she had so often prayed for her cousin.

Nevertheless, she divided her time between Angers and Saumur. Her husband, having shown much devotion in a political cause, became vice-president, and, finally, at the end of three years, President of the Chamber. He now waited impatiently for the general election to gain a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, and already looked forward to the peerage, when—

—"When the king will be his cousin," said Nanon, Big Nanon, Madame Cornoiller, citizen of Saumur.

XXXI.

Monsieur de Bonfons died eight days after he had been elected deputy for Saumur. He never realized his ambition.

"God, who orders all things, and never smites unjustly, punished him for the calculation and cunning with which he had drawn up his marriage contract; in that instrument the husband and wife gave to each other, in case they should have no children, the sum total of their property, real and personal, without exception or reservation, in entire possession, dispensing even with the inventory, without the omission of said inventory being opposed by their heirs or assignees, with the understanding that the said donation be," etc.

This extract will account for the profound respect always testified by the president for the wishes and the retirement of Madame de Bonfons. The women spoke of him as the most modest of men. They pitied him, too; and even went so far as to blame the sorrow and disappointed affection of Eugenie; and that with a censure that women alone know how to mete out to women—that is, hypocritical and malicious commiseration.

"Madame de Bonfons," they said, "must be in very ill-health to leave her husband so much alone. Poor woman! Do you think she will soon recover? What is the matter with her? Is it dyspepsia? or cancer? Why don't she send for a doctor? Poor president!" And so forth.

Eugenie, habituated by grief and her late habits of life, to estimate the conduct and motives of others, soon discovered that her husband longed for her death, that he might come into possession of her fortune; but she only pitied him for his meanness. And now Providence avenged her for his contemplated injustice and heartless indifference.

Madame de Bonfons was a widow at seven-and-thirty, with a fortune of twenty-four millions, and still handsome, though with the beauty of a woman approaching her fortieth year. Her face was colorless and sedate; her voice mild,

and her manners simple. She had all the nobility of grief, the purity of one whose soul is unsullied by contact with the world, and the homely habits which provincial life never fails to impart. Notwithstanding her income of eleven hundred thousand francs, she still lived as Eugenie Grandet lived; she never lighted a fire in her parlor till the first day of November, and always extinguished it on the thirty-first day of March. She dressed as her mother used to dress. The old house in Saumur, sunless, cold, shaded, melancholy, was a type of her life. She carefully accumulated her surplus revenues, and would perhaps have been called parsimonious, had not her noble and perpetual charities given the lie to such an imputation. She founded hospitals for the aged, charity schools for children, and a public library for the province. The churches of Saumur were also indebted to her for many embellishments. Alas! that this noble heart, which beat only with the tenderest sentiments, should be subjected to the cold calculations of human interest!

"There is no one on the earth that loves me but you!" she said one day to Nanon.

And yet her hand administered comfort to all the want and misery around her. The nobleness of her soul atoned for the contracted character of her education and habits. And such is the history and such the fate of this woman, who, though in the world, was not of the world; who, though possessing originally all social qualities and capacities, had no husband, children, nor family.

The denouement of this story *necessarily* deceives the reader's expectations; and perhaps that is the case with all *true* denouements. Tragedies and comedies, to speak the language of the day, are rare in real life. This history is an imperfect version of certain pages, overlooked by the copyist, in the great book of the world. It is, however, by no means an invention, but a humble miniature, which has required, in the finishing, more patience than art. Each province of France has it Grandet, though the Grandet of Mayence, or of Lille, is not so rich as the ex-mayor of Saumur.

The author may have exaggerated some features, unskillfully sketched his terrestrial angels, and thrown too much or too little coloring on his vellum. Perhaps he has made the halo around the head of his virgin too bright; perhaps he has not distributed the light according to the rules of art; and perhaps he has shaded too deeply the dark hues of his miser, an image altogether material. Nevertheless, reader, refuse not your indulgence to the patient monk living in his cell, the humble adorer of the *Rosa Mundi*, if, in defiance of the critics, he persists in endowing woman with so many perfections: he still thinks, for he is still young, that woman is the most perfect of God's creatures. Coming last from the hand that fashioned the universe, it is her prerogative to represent, more truly than any other, the Divine Idea.

Eugenie Grandet may perhaps pass for a type of self-devotion, cast on the stormy billows of life and swallowed up by them—as a noble statue removed from Greece, which during the voyage falls into the sea and is lost to the world forever.

II.

THE ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSART.

I.

THE commercial traveler, a personage unknown to antiquity, is one of the striking figures created by the manners and customs of our present epoch.

Our century will bind the realm of isolated power, abounding as it does in creative genius, to the realm of universal but leveling might; equalizing all products, spreading them broadcast among the masses, and being itself controlled by the principle of unity—the final expression of all societies. Do we not find the dead level of barbarism succeeding the saturnalia of popular thought and the last struggles of those civilizations which accumulated the treasures of the world in one direction?

The commercial traveler! Is he not to the realm of ideas what our stage-coaches are to men and things? He is their vehicle; he sets them going, carries them along, rubs them up with one another. He takes from the luminous center a handful of light and scatters it broadcast among the drowsy populations of the duller regions. This human pyrotechnic is a scholar without learning, a juggler hoaxed by himself, an unbelieving priest of mysteries and dogmas, which he expounds all the better for his want of faith. Curious being! He has seen everything, known everything, and is up in all the ways of the world. Soaked in the vices of Paris, he affects to be the fellow-well-met of the provinces. He is the link which connects the village with the capital; though essentially he is neither Parisian nor provincial—he is a traveler. He sees nothing to the core: men and places he knows by their names; as for things, he looks merely at their surface, and he has his own little tape-line with which to measure them. His glance shoots over all things and penetrates none. He occupies himself with a great deal, yet nothing occupies him.

Jester and jolly fellow, he keeps on good terms with all political opinions, and is patriotic to the bottom of his soul. A capital mimic, he knows how to put on, turn and turn about, the smiles of persuasion, satisfaction, and good-nature, or drop them for the normal expression of his natural man. He is compelled to be an observer of a certain sort in the interests of his trade. He must probe men with a glance and guess their habits, wants, and above all their solvency. To economize time he must come to quick decisions as to his chances of success—a practice that makes him more or less a man of judgment; on the strength of which he sets up as a judge of theaters, and discourses about those of Paris and the provinces.

He knows all the good and bad haunts in France, *de actu et visu*. He can pilot you with equal assurance. Blessed with the eloquence of a hot-water spigot turned on at will, he can check or let run, without floundering, the collection of phrases which he keeps on tap, and which produce upon his victims the effect of a moral shower-bath. Loquacious as a cricket, he smokes, drinks, wears a profusion of trinkets, overawes the common people, passes for a lord in the villages, and never permits himself to be "stumped"—a slang expression all his own. He knows how to slap his pockets at the right time,

---

* Prefatory to "The Selim Shawl."

and make his money jingle if he thinks the servants of the second-class houses which he wants to enter (always eminently suspicious) are likely to take him for a thief. Activity is not the least surprising quality of this human machine. Not the hawk swooping upon its prey, not the stag doubling before the huntsman and the hounds, nor the hounds themselves catching scent of the game, can be compared with him for the rapidity of his dart when he spies a "commission," for the agility with which he trips up a rival and gets ahead of him, for the keenness of his scent as he noses a customer and discovers the spot where he can get off his wares.

How many great qualities must such a man possess! You will find in all countries many such diplomats of low degree; consummate negotiators arguing in the interests of calico, jewels, frippery, wines; and often displaying more true diplomacy than embassadors themselves, who, for the most part, know only the forms of it. No one in France can doubt the powers of the commercial traveler; that intrepid soul who dares all, and boldly brings the genius of civilization and the modern inventions of Paris into a struggle with the plain common-sense of remote villages, and the ignorant and boorish treadmill of provincial ways. Can we ever forget the skillful maneuvers by which he worms himself into the minds of the populace, bringing a volume of words to bear upon the refractory, reminding us of the indefatigable worker in marbles whose file eats slowly into a block of porphyry? Would you seek to know the utmost power of language, or the strongest pressure that a phrase can bring to bear against rebellious lucre, against the miserly proprietor squatting in the recesses of his country lair?—listen to one of these great embassadors of Parisian industry as he revolves and works and sucks like an intelligent piston of the steam-engine called Speculation.

"Monsieur," said a wise political economist, the director-cashier-manager and secretary-general of a celebrated fire-insurance company, "out of every five hundred thousand francs of policies to be renewed in the provinces, not more than fifty thousand are paid up voluntarily. The other four hundred and fifty thousand are got in by the activity of our agents, who go about among those who are in arrears and worry them with stories of horrible incendiaries until they are driven to sign the new policies. Thus you see that eloquence, the labial flux, is nine-tenths of the ways and means of our business."

To talk, to make people listen to you—that is seduction in itself. A nation that has two Chambers, a woman who lends both ears, are soon lost. Eve and her serpent are the everlasting myth of an hourly fact which began, and may end, with the world itself.

"A conversation of two hours ought to capture your man," said a retired lawyer.

Let us walk round the commercial traveler, and look at him well. Don't forget his overcoat, olive green, nor his cloak with its morocco collar, nor the striped blue cotton shirt. In this queer figure—so original that we cannot rub it out—how many divers personalities we come across! In the first place, what an acrobat, what a circus, what a battery, all in one, is the man himself, his vocation, and his tongue! Intrepid mariner, he plunges in, armed with a few phrases, ot catch five or six hundred thousand francs in the frozen seas, in the domain of the red Indians who inhabit the interior of France. The provincial fish will not rise to harpoons and torches; it can only be taken with seines and nets and gentlest persuasions. The traveler's business is to extract the gold in country *caches* by a purely intellectual operation, and to extract it pleasantly and without pain. Can you think without a shudder of the flood of phrases which, day by day, renewed each dawn, leaps in cascades the length and breadth of sunny France?

You know the species; let us now take a look at the individual.

There lives in Paris an incomparable commercial traveler, the paragon of his race, a man who possesses in the highest degree all the qualifications necessary to the nature of his success. His speech is

vitriol and likewise glue—glue to catch and entangle his victim and make him sticky and easy to grip; vitriol to dissolve hard heads, close fists, and closer calculations. His line was once the *hat;* but his talents and the art with which he snared the wariest provincial had brought him such commercial celebrity that all vendors of Parisian goods paid court to him, and humbly begged that he would deign to undertake their commissions.

Thus, when he returned to Paris in the intervals of his triumphal progress through France, he lived a life of perpetual festivity in the shape of weddings and suppers. When he was in the provinces, the correspondents in the smaller towns made much of him; in Paris, the great houses fêted and caressed him. Welcomed, flattered, and fed wherever he went, it came to pass that to breakfast or to dine alone was a novelty, an event. He lived the life of a sovereign, or, better still, of a journalist; in fact, he was the perambulating *feuilleton* of Parisian commerce.

His name was Gaudissart; and his renown, his vogue, the flatteries showered upon him, were such as to win for him the surname of Illustrious. Wherever the fellow went—behind a counter or before a bar, into a salon or to the top of a stage-coach, up to a garret or to dine with a banker—every one said, the moment they saw him,

"Ah! here comes the illustrious Gaudissart!" *

No name was ever so in keeping with the style, the manners, the countenance, the voice, the language, of any man. All things smiled upon our traveler, and the traveler smiled back in return. *Similia similibus*—he believed in homeopathy. Puns, horse-laugh, monkish face, skin of a friar, true Rabelaisian exterior, clothing, body, mind, and features, all pulled together to put a devil-may-care jollity into every inch of his person. Free-handed and easy-going, he might be recognized at once as the favorite of *grisettes,* the man who jumps lightly to the top of a stage-coach, gives a hand to the timid lady who fears to step down, jokes with the postilion about his neckerchief and contrives to sell him a cap, smiles at the maid; gurgles at dinner like a bottle of wine and pretends to draw the cork by sounding a fillip on his distended cheek; plays a tune with his knife on the champagne glasses without breaking them, and says to the company, "Let me see you do *that;*" chaffs the timid traveler, contradicts the knowing one, lords it over a dinner-table and manages to get the titbits for himself. A strong fellow, nevertheless, he can throw aside all this nonsense and mean business when he flings away the stump of his cigar and says, with a glance at some town, "I'll go and see what those people have got in their stomachs."

When buckled down to his work he became the slyest and cleverest of diplomats. All things to all men, he knew how to accost a banker like a capitalist, a magistrate like a functionary, a royalist with pious and monarchial sentiments, a *bourgeois* as one of themselves. In short, wherever he was he was just what he ought to be; he left Gaudissart at the door when he went in, and picked him up when he came out.

Until 1830 the illustrious Gaudissart was faithful to the "*article Paris.*" * In his close relation to the caprices of humanity, the varied paths of commerce had enabled him to observe the windings of the heart of man. He had learned the secret of persuasive eloquence, the knack of loosening the tightest purse-strings, the art of rousing desire in the souls of husbands, wives, children, and servants; and what is more, he knew how to satisfy it. No one had greater faculty than he for inveigling a merchant by the charms of a bargain, and disappearing at the instant when desire had reached its crisis. Full of gratitude to the hat-making trade, he always declared that it was his efforts in

* *Se gaudir,* to make fun. *Gaudriole,* gay discourse, rather free.—LITTRE.

* Whatever is made for sale in the French metropolis.

behalf of the exterior of the human head which had enabled him to understand its interior: he had capped and crowned so many people, he was always flinging himself at their heads, etc. His jokes about hats and heads were irrepressible, though perhaps not dazzling.

Nevertheless, after August and October, 1830, he abandoned the hat trade and the "*article Paris*," and tore himself from things mechanical and visible to mount into the higher spheres of Parisian speculation. "He forsook," to use his own words, "matter for mind; manufactured products for the infinitely purer elaborations of human intelligence." This requires some explanation.

The general upset of 1830 brought to birth, as everybody knows, a number of old ideas which clever speculators tried to pass off in new bodies. After 1830 ideas became property. A writer, too wise to publish his writings, once remarked that "more ideas are stolen than pocket-handkerchiefs." Perhaps in course of time we may have an Exchange for thought; in fact, even now ideas, good or bad, have their consols, are bought up, imported, exported, sold, and quoted like stocks. If ideas are not on hand ready for sale, speculators try to pass off words in their stead, and actually live upon them as a bird lives on the seeds of his millet. Pray do not laugh; a word is worth quite as much as an idea in a land where the ticket on a sack is of more importance than the contents. Have we not seen libraries working off the word *picturesque* when literature would have cut the throat of the word *fantastic?* Fiscal genius has guessed the proper tax on intellect; it has accurately estimated the profits of advertising; it has registered a prospectus of the quantity and exact value of the property, weighing its thought at the intellectual Stamp Office in the Rue de la Paix.

Having become an article of commerce, intellect and all its products must naturally obey the laws which bind other manufacturing interests. Thus it often happens that ideas, conceived in their cups by certain apparently idle Parisians—who nevertheless fight many a moral battle over their champagne and their pheasants—are handed down at their birth from the brain to commercial travelers who are employed to spread them discreetly, *urbi et orbi*, through Paris and the provinces, seasoned with the fried pork of advertisement and prospectus, by means of which they catch in their rat-trap the departmental rodent commonly called subscriber, sometimes stockholder, occasionally corresponding member or patron, but invariably fool.

"I am a fool!" many a poor country proprietor has said when, caught by the prospect of being the first to launch a new idea, he finds that he has, in point of fact, launched his thousand or twelve hundred francs into a gulf.

"Subscribers are fools who never can be brought to understand that to go ahead in the intellectual world they must start with more money than they need for the tour of Europe," say the speculators.

Consequently there is endless warfare between the recalcitrant public which refuses to pay the Parisian imposts and the tax-gatherer who, living by his receipt of custom, lards the public with new ideas, turns it on the spit of lively projects, roasts it with prospectuses (basting all the while with flattery), and finally gobbles it up with some toothsome sauce in which it is caught and intoxicated like a fly with black-lead. Moreover, since 1830 what honors and emoluments have been scattered throughout France to stimulate the zeal and self-love of the "progressive and intelligent masses!" Titles, medals, diplomas, a sort of legion of honor invented for the army of martyrs, have followed each other with marvelous rapidity. Speculators in the manufactured products of the intellect have developed a spice, a ginger, all their own. From this have come premiums, forestalled dividends, and that conscription of noted names which is levied without the knowledge of the unfortunate writers who bear them, and who thus find themselves actual co-operators in more enterprises than there

are days in the year; for the law, we may remark, takes no account of the theft of a patronymic. Worse than all is the rape of ideas which these caterers for the public mind, like the slave-merchants of Asia, tear from the paternal brain before they are well matured, and drag half-clothed before the eyes of their blockhead of a sultan, their Shahabaham, their terrible public, which, if they don't amuse it, will cut off their heads by curtailing the ingots and emptying their pockets.

This madness of our epoch reacted upon the illustrious Gaudissart, and here follows the history of how it happened. A life-insurance company having been told of his irresistible eloquence offered him an unheard-of commission, which he graciously accepted. The bargain concluded and the treaty signed, our traveler was put in training, or we might say weaned, by the secretary-general of the enterprise, who freed his mind of its swaddling-clothes, showed him the dark holes of the business, taught him its dialect, took the mechanism apart bit by bit, dissected for his instruction the particular public he was expected to gull, crammed him with phrases, fed him with impromptu replies, provisioned him with unanswerable arguments, and so to speak, sharpened the file of the tongue which was about to operate upon the life of France.

The puppet amply rewarded the pains bestowed upon him. The heads of the company boasted of the illustrious Gaudissart, showed him such attention and proclaimed the great talents of this perambulating prospectus so loudly in the sphere of exalted banking and commercial diplomacy, that the financial managers of two newspapers (celebrated at that time but since defunct) were seized with the idea of employing him to get subscribers. The proprietors of the "Globe," an organ of Saint-Simonism, and the "Movement," a Republican journal, each invited the illustrious Gaudissart to a conference, and proposed to give him ten francs a head for every subscriber, provided he brought in a thousand, but only five francs if he got no more than five hundred. The cause of political journalism not interfering with the pre-accepted cause of life insurance, the bargain was struck; although Gaudissart demanded an indemnity from the Saint-Simonians for the eight days he was forced to spend in studying the doctrines of their apostle, asserting that a prodigious effort of memory and intellect was necessary to get to the bottom of that "*article*" and to reason upon it suitably. He asked nothing, however, from the Republicans. In the first place, he inclined to republican ideas—the only ones, according to Gaudissardian philosophy, which could bring about a rational equality. Besides which he had already dipped into the conspiracies of the French *carbonari;* he had been arrested, and released for want of proof; and finally, as he called the newspaper proprietors to observe, he had lately grown a mustache, and needed only a hat of a certain shape and a pair of spurs to represent, with due propriety, the Republic.

II.

For one whole week this commanding genius went every morning to be Saint-Simonized at the office of the "Globe," and every afternoon he betook himself to the life insurance company, where he learned the intricacies of financial diplomacy. His aptitude and his memory were prodigious; so that he was able to start on his peregrinations by the 15th of April, the date at which he usually opened the spring campaign. Two large commercial houses, alarmed at the decline of business, implored the ambitious Gaudissart not to desert the *article Paris,* and induced him, it was said, with large offers, to take their commissions once more. The king of travelers was amenable to the claims of his old friends, enforced as they were by the enormous premiums offered to him.

"Listen, my little Jenny," he said, in a hackney-coach, to a pretty florist.

All truly great men delight in allowing themselves to be tyrannized over by a feeble being, and Gaudissart had found his tyrant in Jenny. He was bringing her home at eleven o'clock from the Gymnase, whither he had taken her, in full dress, to a proscenium box on the first tier.

"On my return, Jenny, I shall refurnish your room in superior style. That big Matilda, who pesters you with comparisons and her real India shawls imported by the suite of the Russian embassador, and her silver plate and her Russian prince — who to my mind is nothing but a humbug — won't have a word to say *then*. I consecrate to the adornment of your room all the 'Children' I shall get in the provinces."

"Well, that's a pretty thing to say!" cried the florist. "Monster of a man! Do you dare to talk to me of your children? Do you suppose I am going to stand that sort of thing?"

"Oh, what a goose you are, my Jenny! That's only a figure of speech in our business."

"A fine business, then!"

"Well, but listen; if you talk all the time you'll always be in the right."

"I mean to be. Upon my word, you take things easy!"

"You don't let me finish. I have taken under my protection a superlative idea — a journal, a newspaper, written for children. In our profession, when travelers have caught, let us suppose, ten subscribers to the 'Children's Journal,' they say, 'I've got ten Children,' just as I say when I get ten subscriptions to a newspaper called the 'Movement,' 'I've got ten Movements.' Now don't you see?"

"That's all right. Are you going into politics? If you do you'll get into Sainte-Pélagie, and I shall have to trot down there after you. Oh! if one only knew what one puts one's foot into when we love a man, on my word of honor we would let you alone to take care of yourselves, you men! However, if you are going away to-morrow we won't talk of disagreeable things — that would be silly."

The coach stopped before a pretty house, newly built in the Rue d'Artois, where Gaudissart and Jenny climbed to the fourth story. This was the abode of Mademoiselle Jenny Courand, commonly reported to be privately married to the illustrious Gaudissart, a rumor which that individual did not deny. To maintain her supremacy, Jenny kept him to the performance of innumerable small attentions, and threatened continually to turn him off if he omitted the least of them. She now ordered him to write to her from every town, and render a minute account of all his proceedings.

"How many 'Children' will it take to furnish my chamber?" she asked, throwing off her shawl and sitting down by a good fire.

"I get five sous for each subscriber."

"Delightful! And is it with five sous that you expect to make me rich? Perhaps you are like the Wandering Jew with your pockets full of money."

"But, Jenny, I shall get a thousand 'Children.' Just reflect that children have never had a newspaper to themselves before. But what a fool I am to try to explain matters to you — you can't understand such things."

"Can't I? Then tell me — tell me, Gaudissart, if I'm such a goose why do you love me?"

"Just because you are a goose — a sublime goose! Listen, Jenny. See here, I am going to undertake the 'Globe,' the 'Movement,' the 'Children,' the insurance business, and some of my old *articles Paris;* so instead of earning a miserable eight or ten thousand francs a year, rolling a stone like Mayeux, I shall bring back twenty to thirty thousand from each trip."

"Not really, Gaudissart?"

"Yes, truly," said the traveler, complacently; "I shall become a shareholder in the newspapers, like Finot, one of my friends, the son of a hatter, who now has thirty thousand francs income, and is going to make himself a peer of France. When one thinks of that little Popinot — ah, *mon Dieu!* I forgot to tell you that Monsieur Popinot was named Minister of Commerce yesterday. Why shouldn't I

be ambitious too? Ha! ha! I could easily pick up the jargon of those fellows who talk in the Chamber, and be made a minister, and bluster with the rest of them. Now, listen to me:—

"Gentlemen," he said, standing behind a chair, "the Press is neither a tool nor an article of barter: it is, viewed under its political aspects, an institution. We are bound, in virtue of our position as legislators, to consider all things politically, and therefore" (here he stopped to get breath)—"and therefore we must examine the Press and ask ourselves if it is useful or noxious, if it should be encouraged or put down, taxed or free. These are serious questions. I feel that I do not waste the time, always most precious, of this Chamber by examining this article—the Press—and explaining to you its qualities. We are on the verge of an abyss. Undoubtedly the laws have not the nap which they ought to have—Hein?" he said, looking at Jenny. "All orators put France on the verge of an abyss. They either say that or they talk about the chariot of state, or convulsions, or political horizons. Don't I know their dodges? I'm up to all the tricks of all the trades. Do you know why? Because I was born with a caul; my mother has got it, but I'll give it to you. You'll see! I shall soon be in the government."

"You!"

"Why shouldn't I be the Baron Gaudissart, peer of France? Haven't they twice elected Monsieur Popinot as deputy from the fourth arrondissement? He dines with Louis Philippe. There's Finot; he is going to be, they say, a member of the Council. Suppose they send me as embassador to London? I tell you I'd nonplus those English! No man ever got the better of Gaudissart, the illustrious Gaudissart, and nobody ever will. Yes, I say it! no one ever outwitted me, and no one can—in any walk of life, politics or impolitics, here or elsewhere. But, for the time being, I must give myself wholly to the capitalists; to the 'Globe,' the 'Movement,' the 'Children,' and my *article Paris*."

"You will be brought up with a round turn, you and your newspapers. I'll bet you won't get further than Poitiers before the police nab you."

"What will you bet?"

"A shawl."

"Done! If I lose that shawl I'll go back to the *article Paris* and the hat business. But as for getting the better of Gaudissart—never! never!"

And the illustrious traveler threw himself into position before Jenny, looked at her proudly, one hand in his waistcoat, his head at a three-quarter profile—an attitude truly Napoleonic.

"Oh, how funny you are! what have you been eating to-night?"

Gaudissart was thirty-eight years of age, of medium height, stout and fat like men who roll about continually in stage-coaches, with a face as round as a pumpkin, ruddy cheeks, and regular features of the type which sculptors of all lands adopt as a model for statues of Abundance, Law, Force, Commerce, and the like. His protuberant stomach swelled forth in the shape of a pear; his legs were small, but active and vigorous. He caught Jenny up in his arms like a baby and kissed her.

"Hold your tongue, young woman!" he said. "What do you know about Saint-Simonism, antagonism, Fourierism, criticism, heroic enterprise, or woman's freedom? I'll tell you what they are—ten francs for each subscription, Madame Gaudissart."

"On my word of honor, you are going crazy, Gaudissart."

"More and more crazy about *you*," he replied, flinging his hat upon the sofa.

The next morning Gaudissart, having breakfasted gloriously with Jenny, departed on horseback to work up the chief towns of the district to which he was assigned by the various enterprises in whose interests he was now about to exercise his great talents. After spending forty-five days in beating up the country between Paris and Blois, he remained two weeks at the latter place to write up his correspondence and make short visits to the various market towns of the department. The night before he left Blois for Tours he indited a letter to Mademoiselle Jenny

Courand. As the conciseness and charm of this epistle cannot be equaled by any narration of ours, and as, moreover, it proves the legitimacy of the tie which united these two individuals, we produce it here—

"My dear Jenny—You will lose your wager. Like Napoleon, Gaudissart the illustrious has his star, but *not* his Waterloo. I triumph everywhere. Life insurance has done well. Between Paris and Blois I lodged two millions. But as I get to the center of France heads become infinitely harder and millions correspondingly scarce. The *article Paris* keeps up its own little jog-trot. It is a ring on the finger. With all my well-known cunning I spit these shopkeepers like larks. I got off one hundred and sixty-two Ternaux shawls at Orleans. I am sure I don't know what they will do with them, unless they return them to the backs of the sheep.

"As to the *article journal*—the devil! that's a horse of another color. Holy saints! how one has to warble before you can teach these bumpkins a new tune. I have only made sixty-two 'Movements:' exactly a hundred less for the whole trip than the shawls in one town. Those republican rogues! they won't subscribe. You talk, they talk; they share your opinions, and presently you are all agreed that every existing thing must be overturned. You feel sure your man is going to subscribe. Not a bit of it! If he owns three feet of ground, enough to grow ten cabbages, or a few trees to slice into toothpicks, the fellow begins to talk of consolidated property, taxes, revenues, indemnities—a whole lot of stuff, and I have wasted my time and breath on patriotism. It's a bad business! Candidly, the 'Movement' does not move. I have written to the directors and told them so. I am sorry for it—on account of my political opinions.

"As for the 'Globe,' that's another breed altogether. Just set to work and talk new doctrines to people you fancy are fools enough to believe such lies—why, they think you want to burn their houses down! It is in vain for me to tell them that I speak for futurity, for posterity, for self-interest properly understood; for enterprise where nothing can be lost; that man has preyed upon man long enough; that woman is a slave; that the great providential thought should be made to triumph; that a way must be found to arrive at a rational coordination of the social fabric—in short, the whole reverberation of my sentences. Well, what do you think? when I open upon them with such ideas these provincials lock their cupboards as if I wanted to steal their spoons and beg me to go away! Are not they fools? geese? The 'Globe' is smashed. I said to the proprietors, 'You are too advanced, you go ahead too fast: you ought to get a few results; the provinces like results.' However, I have made a hundred 'Globes,' and I must say, considering the thickheadedness of these clodhoppers, it is a miracle. But to do it I had to make them such a lot of promises that I am sure I don't know how the globites, globists, globules, or whatever they call themselves, will ever get out of them. But they always tell me they can make the world a great deal better than it is, so I go ahead and prophesy to the value of ten francs for each subscription. There was one farmer who thought the paper was agricultural because of its name. I Globed *him*. Bah! he gave in at once; he had a projecting forehead; all men with projecting foreheads are ideologists.

"But the 'Children'; oh! ah! as to the 'Children'! I got two thousand between Paris and Blois. Jolly business! but there is not much to say. You just show a little vignette to the mother, pretending to hide it from the child: naturally the child wants to see, and pulls mamma's gown and cries for its newspaper, because 'Papa has *dot* his.' Mamma can't let her brat tear the gown; the gown costs thirty francs, the subscription six—economy; result, subscription. It is an excellent thing, meets an actual want; it holds a place between dolls and sugar-plums, the two eternal necessities of childhood.

"I have had a quarrel here at the table d'hôte about the newspapers and my opinions. I was unsuspiciously eating my dinner next to a man with a gray hat who was reading the 'Debats.' I said to myself, 'Now for my rostrum eloquence. He is tied to the dynasty; I'll cook him; this triumph will be capital practice for my ministerial talents.' So I went to work and praised his 'Debats.' Hein! if I didn't lead him along! Thread by thread, I began to net my man. I launched my four-horse phrases, and the F-sharp arguments, and all the rest of the cursed stuff. Everybody listened; and I saw a man who had July as plain as day on his mustache, just ready to nibble at a 'Movement.' Well, I don't know how it was, but I unluckily let fall the word 'blockhead.' Thunder! you should have seen my gray hat, my dynastic hat (shocking bad hat, anyhow), who got the bit in his teeth and was furiously angry. I put on my grand air—you know—and said to him: 'Ah, ça! monsieur, you are remarkably aggressive; if you are not content, I am ready to give you satisfaction; I fought in July.' 'Though the father of a family,' he replied, 'I am ready—' 'Father of a family!' I exclaimed; 'my dear sir, have you any children?' 'Yes.' 'Twelve years old?' 'Just about.' 'Well, then, the "Children's Journal" is the very thing for you; six francs a year, one number a month, double columns, edited by great literary lights, well got up, good paper, engravings from charming sketches by our best artists, actual colored drawings of the Indies—will not fade.' I fired my broadside 'feelings of a father, etc. etc.,'—in short, a subscription instead of a quarrel. 'There's nobody but Gaudissart who can get out of things like that,' said that little cricket Lamard to the big Bulot at the café, when he told him the story.

"I leave to-morrow for Amboise. I shall do up Amboise in two days, and I will write next from Tours, where I shall measure swords with the inhabitants of that colorless region; colorless, I mean, from the intellectual and speculative point of view. But, on the word of a Gaudissart, they shall be toppled over, toppled down—floored, I say.

"Adieu, my kitten. Love me always; be faithful; fidelity through thick and thin, is one of the attributes of the Free Woman. Who is kissing you on the eyelids? THY FELIX FOREVER."

III.

FIVE days later Gaudissart started from the Hôtel des Faisans, at which he had put up in Tours, and went to Vouvray, a rich and populous district where the public mind seemed to him susceptible of cultivation. Mounted upon his horse, he trotted along the embankment thinking no more of his phrases than an actor thinks of his part which he has played for a hundred times. It was thus that the illustrious Gaudissart went his cheerful way, admiring the landscape, and little dreaming that in the happy valleys of Vouvray his commercial infallibility was about to perish.

Here a few remarks upon the public mind of Touraine are essential to our story. The subtle, satirical, epigrammatic tale-telling spirit stamped on every page of Rabelais is the faithful expression of the Tourangian mind—a mind polished and refined as it should be in a land where the kings of France long held their court; ardent, artistic, poetic, voluptuous, yet whose first impulses subside quickly. The softness of the atmosphere, the beauty of the climate, a certain ease of life and joviality of manners, smother before long the sentiment of art, narrow the widest heart, and enervate the strongest will. Transplant the Tourangian, and his fine qualities develop and lead to great results, as we may see in many spheres of action: look at Rabelais and Semblançay, Plantin the printer and Descartes, Boucicault, the Napoleon of his day, and Pinaigrier, who painted most of the colored glass in our cathedrals; also Verville and Courier. But the Tourangian, distinguished though he be in other regions,

sits in his own home like an Indian on his mat or a Turk on his divan. He employs his wit in laughing at his neighbor and in making merry all his days; and when at last he reaches the end of his life, he is still a happy man. Touraine is like the Abbaye of Thélême, so vaunted in the history of Gargantua. There we may find the complying sisterhoods of that famous tale, and there the good cheer celebrated by Rabelais reigns in glory.

As to the do-nothingness of that blessed land it is sublime and well expressed in a certain popular legend: "Tourangian, are you hungry, do you want some soup?" "Yes." "Bring your porringer." "Then I am not hungry." Is it to the joys of the vineyard and the harmonious loveliness of this garden land of France, is it to the peace and tranquillity of a region where the step of an invader has never trodden, that we owe the soft compliance of these unconstrained and easy manners? To such questions no answer. Enter this Turkey of sunny France, and you will stay there—lazy, idle, happy. You may be as ambitious as Napoleon, as poetic as Lord Byron, and yet a power unknown, invisible, will compel you to bury your poetry within your soul and turn your projects into dreams.

The illustrious Gaudissart was fated to encounter here in Vouvray one of those indigenous jesters whose jests are not intolerable solely because they have reached the perfection of the mocking art. Right or wrong, the Tourangians are fond of inheriting from their parents. Consequently the doctrines of Saint-Simon were especially hated and villified among them. In Touraine hatred and villification take the form of superb disdain and witty maliciousness worthy of the land of good stories and practical jokes—a spirit which, alas! is yielding, day by day, to that other spirit which Lord Byron has characterized as "English cant."

For his sins, after getting down at the "Golden Sun," an inn kept by a former grenadier of the imperial guard named Mitouflet, married to a rich widow, the illustrious traveler, after a brief consultation with the landlord, betook himself to the knave of Vouvray, the jovial merry-maker, the comic man of the neighborhood, compelled by fame and nature to supply the town with merriment. This country Figaro was once a dyer, and now possessed about seven or eight thousand francs a year, a pretty house on the slope of the hill, a plump little wife, and robust health. For ten years he had had nothing to do but take care of his wife and his garden, marry his daughter, play whist in the evenings, keep the run of all the gossip of the neighborhood, meddle with the elections, squabble with the large proprietors, and order good dinners; or else trot along the embankment to find out what was going on in Tours, torment the curé, and finally, by way of dramatic entertainment, assist at the sale of lands in the neighborhood of his vineyards.

In short, he led the true Tourangian life—the life of a little country-townsman. He was, moreover, an important member of the *bourgeoisie*—a leader among the small proprietors, all of them envious, jealous, delighted to catch up and retail gossip and calumnies against the aristocracy; dragging things down to their own level; and at war with all kinds of superiority, which they despised with the fine composure of ignorance. Monsieur Vernier—such was the name of this great little man—was just finishing his breakfast, with his wife and daughter on either side of him, when Gaudissart entered the room through a window that looked out on the Loire and the Cher, and lighted one of the gayest dining-rooms of that gay land.

"Is this Monsieur Vernier himself?" said the traveler, bending his vertebral column with such grace that it seemed to be elastic.

"Yes, monsieur," said the mischievous ex-dyer, with a scrutinizing look which took in the style of man he had to deal with.

"I come, monsieur," resumed Gaudissart, "to solicit the aid of your knowledge and insight to guide my efforts in this district, where Mitouflet tells me you have the greatest influence. Monsieur, I am sent into the provinces on an enter-

prise of the utmost importance, undertaken by bankers who—"

"Who mean to win our tricks," said Vernier, long used to the ways of commercial travelers and to their periodical visits.

"Precisely," replied Gaudissart, with native impudence. "But with your fine tact, monsieur, you must be aware that we can't win tricks from people unless it is their interest to play at cards. I beg you not to confound me with the vulgar herd of travelers who succeed by humbug or importunity. I am no longer a commercial traveler. I was one, and I glory in it; but to-day my mission is of higher importance, and should place me, in the minds of superior people, among those who devote themselves to the enlightenment of their country. The most distinguished bankers in Paris take part in this affair; not fictitiously, as in some shameful speculations which I call rat-traps. No, no, nothing of the kind! I should never condescend — never! — to hawk about such *catch-fools*. No, monsieur; the most respectable houses in Paris are concerned in this enterprise; and their interests guarantee—"

Hereupon Gaudissart drew forth his whole string of phrases, and Monsieur Vernier let him go to the length of his tether, listening with an apparent interest which completely deceived him. But after the word "guarantee" Vernier paid no further attention to our traveler's rhetoric, and turned over in his mind how to play him some malicious trick and deliver a land, justly considered half-savage by speculators unable to get a bite of it, from the inroads of these Parisian caterpillars.

At the head of an enchanting valley, called the Valley Coquette because of its windings and the curves which return upon each other at every step, and seem more and more lovely as we advance, whether we ascend or descend them, there lived, in a little house surrounded by vineyards, a half-insane man named Margaritis. He was of Italian origin, married, but childless; and his wife took care of him with a courage fully appreciated by the neighborhood. Madame Margaritis was undoubtedly in real danger from a man who, among other fancies, persisted in carrying about with him two long-bladed knives with which he sometimes threatened her. Who has not seen the wonderful self-devotion shown by provincials who consecrate their lives to the care of sufferers, possibly because of the disgrace heaped upon a *bourgeoise* if she allows her husband or children to be taken to a public hospital? Moreover, who does not know the repugnance which these people feel to the payment of the two or three thousand francs required at Charenton or in the private lunatic asylums? If any one had spoken to Madame Margaritis of Doctors Dubuisson, Esquirol, Blanche, and others, she would have preferred, with noble indignation, to keep her thousands and take care of the "good-man" at home.

As the incomprehensible whims of this lunatic are connected with the current of our story, we are compelled to exhibit the most striking of them. Margaritis went out as soon as it rained, and walked about bareheaded in his vineyard. At home he made incesssant inquiries for newspapers; to satisfy him his wife and the maid-servant used to give him an old journal called the "Indre-et-Loire," and for seven years he had never yet perceived that he was reading the same number over and over again. Perhaps a doctor would have observed with interest the connection that evidently existed between the recurring and spasmodic demands for the newspaper and the atmospheric variations of the weather.

Usually when his wife had company, which happened nearly every evening, for the neighbors, pitying her situation, would frequently come to play at boston in her salon, Margaritis remained silent in a corner and never stirred. But the moment ten o'clock began to strike on a clock which he kept shut up in a large oblong closet, he rose at the stroke with the mechanical precision of the figures which are made to move by springs in the German toys. He would then advance slowly toward the players, give

them a glance like the automatic gaze of the Greeks and Turks exhibited on the Boulevard du Temple, and say sternly, "Go away!" There were days when he had lucid intervals and could give his wife excellent advice as to the sale of their wines; but at such times he became extremely annoying, and would ransack her closets and steal her delicacies, which he devoured in secret. Occasionally, when the usual visitors made their appearance he would treat them with civility; but as a general thing his remarks and replies were incoherent. For instance, a lady once asked him, "How do you feel to-day, Monsieur Margaritis?" "I have grown a beard," he replied, "have you?" "Are you better?" asked another. "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" was the answer. But the greater part of the time he gazed stolidly at his guests without uttering a word; and then his wife would say, "The good-man does not hear anything to-day."

On two or three occasions in the course of five years, and usually about the time of the equinox, this remark had driven him to frenzy; he flourished his knives and shouted, "That joke dishonors me!"

As for his daily life, he ate, drank, and walked about like other men in sound health; and so it happened that he was treated with about the same respect and attention that we give to a heavy piece of furniture. Among his many absurdities was one of which no man had as yet discovered the object, although by long practice the wiseheads of the community had learned to unravel the meaning of most of his vagaries. He insisted on keeping a sack of flour and two puncheons of wine in the cellar of his house, and he would allow no one to lay hands on them. But when the month of June came round he grew uneasy with the restless anxiety of a madman about the sale of the sack and the puncheons. Madame Margaritis could nearly always persuade him that the wine had been sold at an enormous price, which she paid over to him, and which he hid so cautiously that neither his wife nor the servant who watched him had ever been able to discover its hiding place.

The evening before Gaudissart reached Vouvray Madame Margaritis had had more difficulty than usual in deceiving her husband, whose mind happened to be uncommonly lucid.

"I really don't know how I shall get through to-morrow," she had said to Madame Vernier. "Would you believe it, the good-man insists on watching his two casks of wine. He has worried me so this whole day, that I had to show him two full puncheons. Our neighbor, Pierre Champlain, fortunately had two which he had not sold. I asked him to kindly let me have them rolled into our cellar; and oh, dear! now that the good-man has seen them he insists on bottling them off himself."

Madame Vernier had related the poor woman's trouble to her husband just before the entrance of Gaudissart, and at the first words of the famous traveler Vernier determined that he should be made to grapple with Margaritis.

"Monsieur," said the ex-dyer, as soon as the illustrious Gaudissart had fired his first broadside, "I will not hide from you the great difficulties which my native place offers to your enterprise. This part of the country goes along, as it were, in the rough—*suo modo*. It is a country where new ideas don't take hold. We live as our fathers lived, we amuse ourselves with four meals a day, and we cultivate our vineyards and sell our wines to the best advantage. Our business principle is to sell things for more than they cost us; we shall stick in that rut, and neither God nor the devil can get us out of it. I will, however, give you some advice, and good advice is an egg in the hand. There is in this town a retired banker in whose wisdom I have—I, particularly—the greatest confidence. If you can obtain his support, I will add mine. If your proposals have real merit, if we are convinced of the advantage of your enterprise, the approval of Monsieur Margaritis (which carries with it mine) will open to you at least twenty rich houses in Vouvray who will be glad to try your specifics."

When Madame Vernier heard the name

of the lunatic she raised her head and looked at her husband.

"Ah, precisely; my wife intends to call on Madame Margaritis with one of our neighbors. Wait a moment, and you can accompany these ladies—you can pick up Madame Fontanieu on your way," said the wily dyer, winking at his wife.

To pick out the greatest gossip, the sharpest tongue, the most inveterate cackler of the neighborhood! It meant that Madame Vernier was to take a witness to the scene between the traveler and the lunatic who should keep the town in laughter for a month. Monsieur and Madame Vernier played their part so well that Gaudissart had no suspicions, and straightway fell into the trap. He gallantly offered his arm to Madame Vernier, and believed that he made, as they went along, the conquest of both ladies, for whose benefit he sparkled with wit and humor and undetected puns.

The house of the pretended banker stood at the entrance to the Valley Coquette. The place, called La Fuye, had nothing remarkable about it. On the ground floor was a large wainscoted salon, on either side of which opened the bedroom of the good man and that of his wife. The salon was entered from an antechamber, which served as the dining-room and communicated with the kitchen. This lower floor, which was wholly without the external charm usually seen even in the humblest dwellings in Touraine, was covered by a mansard story, reached by a stairway built on the outside of the house against the gable end and protected by a shed-roof.

A little garden, full of marigolds, syringas, and elder-bushes, separated the house from the fields; and all around the court-yard were detached buildings which were used in the vintage season for the various processes of making wine.

IV.

MARGARITIS was seated in an armchair covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, near the window of the salon, and he did not stir as the two ladies entered with Gaudissart. His thoughts were running on the casks of wine. He was a spare man, and his bald head, garnished with a few spare locks at the back of it, was pear-shaped in conformation. His sunken eyes, overtopped by heavy black brows and surrounded by discolored circles, his nose, thin and sharp like the blade of a knife, the strongly marked jawbone, the hollow cheeks, and the oblong tendency of all these lines, together with his unnaturally long and flat chin, contributed to give a peculiar expression to his countenance—something between that of a retired professor of rhetoric and a ragpicker.

"Monsieur Margaritis!" cried Madame Vernier, addressing him, "come, stir about! Here is a gentleman whom my husband sends to you, and you must listen to him with great attention. Put away your mathematics and talk to him."

On hearing these words the lunatic rose, looked at Gaudissart, made him a sign to sit down, and said, "Let us converse, monsieur."

The two women went into Madame Margaritis' bedroom, leaving the door open so as to hear the conversation, and interpose if it became necessary. They were hardly installed before Monsieur Vernier crept softly up through the field and, opening a window, got into the bedroom without noise.

"Monsieur has doubtless been in business?—" began Gaudissart.

"Public business," answered Margaritis, interrupting him. "I pacificated Calabria under the reign of King Murat."

"Bless me! if he hasn't gone to Calabria!" whispered Monsieur Vernier.

"In that case," said Gaudissart, "we shall quickly understand each other."

"I am listening," said Margaritis, striking the attitude taken by a man when he poses to a portrait-painter.

"Monsieur," said Gaudissart, who chanced to be turning his watch-key with a rotatory and periodical click which caught the attention of the lunatic

and contributed no doubt to keep him quiet. "Monsieur, if you were not a man of superior intelligence" (the fool bowed), "I should content myself with merely laying before you the material advantages of this enterprise, whose psychological aspects it would be a waste of time to explain to you. Listen! Of all kinds of social wealth, is not time the most precious? To economize time is, consequently, to become wealthy. Now, is there anything that consumes so much time as those anxieties which I call '*pot-boiling*'?—a vulgar expression, but it puts the whole question in a nutshell. For instance, what can eat up more time than the inability to give proper security to persons from whom you seek to borrow money when, poor at the moment, you are nevertheless rich in hope?"

"Money—yes, that's right," said Margaritis.

"Well, monsieur, I am sent into the departments by a company of bankers and capitalists, who have apprehended the enormous waste which rising men of talent are thus making of time, and, consequently, of intelligence and productive ability. We have seized the idea of capitalizing for such men their future prospects, and cashing their talents by discounting — what? TIME; securing the value of it to their survivors. I may say that it is no longer a question of economizing time, but of giving it a price, a quotation; of representing in a pecuniary sense those products developed by time which presumably you possess in the region of your intellect; of representing also the moral qualities with which you are endowed, and which are, monsieur, living forces—as living as a cataract, as a steam-engine of three, ten, twenty, fifty horse-power. Ha! this is progress! the movement onward to a better state of things; a movement born of the spirit of our epoch; a movement essentially progressive, as I shall prove to you when we come to consider the principles involved in the logical co-ordination of the social fabric. I will now explain my meaning by literal examples, leaving aside all purely abstract reasoning, which I call the mathematics of thought. Instead of being, as you are, a proprietor living upon your income, let us suppose that you are a painter, a musician, an artist, or a poet—"

"I am a painter," said the lunatic.

"Well, so be it. I see you take my metaphor. You are a painter; you have a glorious future, a rich future before you. But I go still farther—"

At these words the madman looked anxiously at Gaudissart, thinking he meant to go away; but was reassured when he saw that he kept his seat.

"You may even be nothing at all," said Gaudissart, going on with his phrases, "but you are conscious of yourself; you feel yourself—"

"I feel myself," said the lunatic.

"—you feel yourself a great man; you say to yourself, 'I will be a minister of state.' Well, then, you—painter, artist, man of letters, statesman of the future — you reckon upon your talents, you estimate their value, you rate them, let us say, at a hundred thousand crowns—"

"Do you give me a hundred thousand crowns?"

"Yes, monsieur, as you will see. Either your heirs and assigns will receive them if you die, for the company contemplates that event, or you will receive them in the long run through your works of art, your writings or your fortunate speculations during your lifetime. But, as I have already had the honor to tell you, when you have once fixed upon the value of your intellectual capital—for it is intellectual capital—seize that idea firmly—intellectual—"

"I understand," said the fool.

"You sign a policy of insurance with a company which recognizes in you a value of a hundred thousand crowns; in you, poet—"

"I am a painter," said the lunatic.

"Yes," resumed Gaudissart—"painter, poet, musician, statesman—and binds itself to pay them over to your family, your heirs, if, by reason of your death, the hopes founded on your intellectual capital should be overthrown for you personally.

The payment of the premium is all that is required to protect—"

"The money-box," said the lunatic, sharply interrupting him.

"Ah! naturally; yes. I see that monsieur understands business."

"Yes," said the madman. "I established the Territorial Bank in the Rue des Fossés-Montmartre at Paris in 1798."

"For," resumed Gaudissart, going back to his premium, "in order to meet the payments on the intellectual capital which each man recognizes and esteems in himself, it is of course necessary that each should pay a certain premium, three per cent; an annual due of three per cent. Thus, by the payment of this trifling sum, a mere nothing, you protect your family from disastrous results at your death—"

"But I live," said the fool.

"Ah! yes; you mean if you should live long? That is the usual objection—a vulgar prejudice. I fully agree that if we had not foreseen and demolished it we might feel we were unworthy of being—what? What are we, after all? Bookkeepers in the great Bureau of Intellect. Monsieur, I don't apply these remarks to you, but I meet on all sides men who make it a business to teach new ideas and disclose chains of reasoning to people who turn pale at the first word. On my word of honor, it is pitiable! But that's the way of the world, and I don't pretend to reform it. Your objection, monsieur, is really sheer nonsense."

"Why?" asked the lunatic.

"Why?—this is why: because, if you live and possess the qualities which are estimated in your policy against the chances of death—now, attend to this—"

"I am attending."

"Well, then, you have succeeded in life; and you have succeeded because of the said insurance. You doubled your chances of success by getting rid of the anxieties you were dragging about with you in the shape of wife and children who might otherwise be left destitute at your death. If you attain this certainty, you have touched the value of your intellectual capital, on which the cost of insurance is a trifle—a mere trifle, a bagatelle."

"That's a fine idea!"

"Ah! is it not, monsieur?" cried Gaudissart. "I call this enterprise the exchequer of beneficence; a mutual insurance against poverty; or, if you like it better, the discounting, the cashing, of talent. For talent, monsieur, is a bill of exchange which Nature gives to the man of genius, and which often has a long time to run before it falls due."

"That is usury!" cried Margaritis.

"The devil! he's keen, the old fellow! I've made a mistake," thought Gaudissart, "I must catch him with other chaff. I'll try humbug No. 1.—Not at all," he said aloud, "for you who—"

"Will you take a glass of wine?" asked Margaritis.

"With pleasure," replied Gaudissart.

"Wife, give us a bottle of the wine that is in the puncheons. You are here at the very head of Vouvray," he continued, with a gesture of the hand, "the vineyard of Margaritis."

The maid-servant brought glasses and a bottle of wine of the vintage of 1819. The good-man filled a glass with circumspection and offered it to Gaudissart, who drank it up.

"Ah, you are joking, monsieur!" exclaimed the commercial traveler. "Surely this is Madeira, true Madeira?"

"So you think," said the fool. "The trouble with our Vouvray wine is that it is neither a common wine, nor a wine that can be drunk with the *entremets*. It is too generous, too strong. It is often sold in Paris adulterated with brandy and called Madeira. The wine-merchants buy it up, when our vintage has not been good enough for the Dutch and Belgian markets, to mix it with wines grown in the neighborhood of Paris, and call it Bordeaux. But what you are drinking just now, my good monsieur, is a wine for kings, the pure Head of Vouvray—that's its name. I have two puncheons, only two puncheons of it left. People who like fine wines, high-class wines, who furnish their table with qualities that can't be bought in the regular trade—and there are many

persons in Paris who have that vanity —well, such people send direct to us for this wine. Do you know any one who—?"

"Let us go on with what we were saying," interposed Gaudissart.

"We are going on," said the fool. "My wine is capital; you are capital, capitalist, intellectual capital, capital wine—all the same etymology, don't you see? hein? Capital, *caput*, head, Head of Vouvray, that's my wine—it's all one thing."

"So that you have realized your intellectual capital through your wines? Ah, I see!" said Gaudissart.

"I have realized," said the lunatic. "Would you like to buy my puncheons? you shall have them on good terms."

"No, I was merely speaking," said the illustrious Gaudissart, "of the results of insurance and the employment of intellectual capital. I will resume my argument."

The lunatic calmed down, and fell once more into position.

"I remarked, monsieur, that if you die the capital will be paid to your family without discussion."

"Without discussion?"

"Yes, unless there were suicide."

"That's quibbling."

"No, monsieur; you are aware that suicide is one of those acts which are easy to prove—"

"In France," said the fool; "but—"

"But in other countries?" said Gaudissart. "Well, monsieur, to cut short discussion on this point, I will say, once for all, that death in foreign countries or on the field of battle is outside of our—"

"Then what are you insuring? Nothing at all!" cried Margaritis. "My bank, my Territorial Bank, rested upon—"

"Nothing at all?" exclaimed Gaudissart, interrupting the good-man. "Nothing at all? What do you call sickness, and afflictions, and poverty, and passions? Don't go off on exceptional points."

"No, don't point," said the lunatic.

"Now, what's the result of all this?" cried Gaudissart. "To you, a banker, I can sum up the profits in a few words. Listen. A man lives; he has a future; he appears well; he lives, let us say, by his art; he wants money; he tries to get it—he fails. Civilization withholds cash from this man whose thought could master civilization, and ought to master it, and will master it some day with a brush, a chisel, with words, ideas, theories, systems. Civilization is atrocious! It denies bread to the men who give it luxury. It starves them on sneers and curses, the beggarly rascal! My words may be strong, but I shall not retract them. Well, this great but neglected man comes to us; we recognize his greatness; we salute him with respect; we listen to him. He says to us: 'Gentlemen, my life and talents are worth so much; on my productions I will pay you such or such percentage.' Very good; what do we do? Instantly, without reserve or hesitation, we admit him to the great festivals of civilization as an honored guest—"

"You need wine for that," interposed the madman.

"—as an honored guest. He signs the insurance policy; he takes our bits of paper—scraps, rags, miserable rags!—which, nevertheless, have more power in the world than his unaided genius. Then, if he wants money, every one will lend it to him on those rags. At the Bourse, among bankers, wherever he goes, even at the usurers, he will find money because he can give security. Well, monsieur, is not that a great gulf to bridge over in our social system? But that is only one aspect of our work. We insure debtors by another scheme of policies and premiums. We offer annuities at rates graduated according to ages, on a sliding-scale infinitely more advantageous than what are called tontines, which are based on tables of mortality that are notoriously false. Our company deals with large masses of men; consequently the annuitants are secured from those distressing fears which sadden old age—too sad already!—fears which pursue those who receive annuities from private sources. You see, monsieur, that we have estimated life under all its aspects."

"Sucked it at both ends," said the lunatic. "Take another glass of wine. You've earned it. You must line your inside with velvet if you are going to pump at it like that every day. Monsieur, the wine of Vouvray, if well kept, is downright velvet."

"Now, what do you think of it all?" said Gaudissart, emptying his glass.

"It is very fine, very new, very useful; but I like the discounts I get at my Territorial Bank, Rue des Fossés-Montmartre."

"You are quite right, monsieur," answered Gaudissart; "but that sort of thing is taken and retaken, made and remade, every day. You have also hypothecating banks which lend upon landed property and redeem it on a large scale. But that is a narrow idea compared to our system of consolidating hopes—consolidating hopes! coagulating, so to speak, the aspirations born in every soul, and insuring the realization of our dreams. It needed our epoch, monsieur, the epoch of transition—transition and progress—"

"Yes, progress," muttered the lunatic, with his glass at his lips. "I like progress. That is what I've told them many times—"

"The 'Times'!" cried Gaudissart, who did not catch the whole sentence. "The 'Times' is a bad newspaper. If you read that, I am sorry for you."

"The newspaper!" cried Margaritis. "Of course! Wife! wife! where is the newspaper?" he cried, going toward the next room.

"If you are interested in newspapers," said Gaudissart, changing his attack, "we are sure to understand each other."

"Yes; but before we say anything about that, tell me what you think of this wine."

"Delicious!"

"Then let us finish the bottle." The lunatic poured out a thimbleful for himself and filled Gaudissart's glass. "Well, monsieur, I have two puncheons left of the same wine; if you find it good we can come to terms."

"Exactly," said Gaudissart. "The fathers of the Saint-Simonian faith have authorized me to send them all the commodities I— But allow me to tell you about their noble newspaper. You, who have understood the whole question of insurance so thoroughly, and who are willing to assist my work in this district—"

"Yes," said Margaritis, "if—"

"If I take your wine; I understand perfectly. Your wine is very good, monsieur; it puts the stomach in a perfect glow."

"They make champagne out of it; there is a man from Paris who comes here and makes it in Tours."

"I have no doubt of it, monsieur. The 'Globe,' of which we were speaking—"

"Yes, I've gone over it," said Margaritis.

"I was sure of it!" exclaimed Gaudissart. "Monsieur, you have a fine frontal development; a pate—excuse the word—which our gentlemen call *horse-head.* There's a horse element in the head of every great man. Genius will make itself known; but sometimes it happens that great men, in spite of their gifts, remain obscure. Such was very nearly the case with Saint-Simon; also with Monsieur Vico—a strong man just beginning to shoot up; I am proud of Vico. Now, here we enter upon the new theory and formula of humanity. Attention, if you please."

"Attention!" said the fool, falling into position.

"Man's spoliation of man—by which I mean bodies of men living upon the labor of other men—ought to have ceased with the coming of Christ, I say *Christ,* who was sent to proclaim the equality of man in the sight of God. But what is the fact? Equality up to our day has been an *ignus fatuus,* a chimera. Saint-Simon has arisen as the complement of Christ; as the modern exponent of the doctrine of equality, or rather of its practice, for theory has served its time—"

"Is he liberated?" asked the lunatic.

"Like liberalism, it has had its day. There is a nobler future before us: a new faith, free labor, free growth, free pro-

duction, individual progress, a social coordination in which each man shall receive the full worth of his individual labor, in which no man shall be preyed upon by other men who, without capacity of their own, compel *all* to work for the profit of *one*. From this comes the doctrine of—"

"How about servants?" demanded the lunatic.

"They will remain servants if they have no capacity beyond it."

"Then what's the good of your doctrine?"

"To judge of this doctrine, monsieur, you must consider it from a higher point of view: you must take a general survey of humanity. Here we come to the theories of Ballanche: do you know his Palingenesis?"

"I am fond of them," said the fool, who thought he said *ices*.

"Good!" returned Gaudissart. "Well, then, if the palingenistic aspects of the successive transformations of the spiritualized globe have struck, stirred, roused you, then, my dear sir, the 'Globe' newspaper—noble name which proclaims its mission—the 'Globe' is an organ, a guide, who will explain to you with the coming of each day the conditions under which this vast political and moral change will be effected. The gentlemen who—"

"Do they drink wine?"

"Yes, monsieur; their houses are kept up in the highest style; I may say, in prophetic style. Superb salons, large receptions, the apex of social life—"

"Well," remarked the lunatic, "the workmen who pull things down want wine as much as those who put things up."

"True," said the illustrious Gaudissart, "and all the more, monsieur, when they pull down with one hand and build up with the other, like the apostles of the 'Globe.'"

"They want good wine; Head of Vouvray, two puncheons, three hundred bottles, only one hundred francs—a mere trifle!"

"How much is that a bottle?" said Gaudissart, calculating. "Let me see; there's the freight and the duty—it will come to about seven sous. Why, it wouldn't be a bad thing: they give more for worse wines—(Good! I've got him!" thought Gaudissart, "he wants to sell me wine which I want; I'll master him)—Well, monsieur," he continued, "those who argue usually come to an agreement. Let us be frank with each other. You have great influence in this district—"

"I should think so!" said the madman; "I am the Head of Vouvray!"

"Well, I see that you thoroughly comprehend the insurance of intellectual capital—"

"Thoroughly!"

"—and that you have measured the full importance of the 'Globe'—"

"Twice; on foot."

Gaudissart was listening to himself and not to his hearer.

"Therefore, in view of your circumstances and of your age, I quite understand that you have no need of insurance for yourself; but, monsieur, you might induce others to insure, either because of their inherent qualities which need development, or for the protection of their families against a precarious future. Now, if you will subscribe to the 'Globe,' and give me your personal assistance in this district on behalf of insurance, especially life annuity—for the provinces are much attached to annuities— Well, if you will do this, then we can come to an understanding about the wine. Will you take the 'Globe'?"

"I stand on the globe."

"Will you advance its interests in this district?"

"I advance."

"And?"

"And—"

"And I—but you do subscribe, don't you, to the 'Globe'?"

"The globe, good thing, annuity," said the lunatic.

"Annuity, monsieur?—ah, I see! yes, you are right: it is full of life, vigor, intellect, science—absolutely crammed with science—well printed, clear type, well set

up; what I call 'good nap.' None of your blotched stuff, cotton and wool, trumpery; flimsy rubbish that rips if you look at it. It is deep; it states questions on which you can meditate at your leisure; it is the very thing to make time pass agreeably in the country."

"That suits me," said the lunatic.

"And it only costs a trifle — eighty francs."

"That won't suit me," answered the lunatic.

"Monsieur!" cried Gaudissart, "of course you have got grandchildren? There's the 'Children's Journal;' that only costs seven francs a year."

"Very good; take my wine, and I will subscribe to the 'Children.' That suits me very well: a fine idea! intellectual product, child. That's man living upon man, hein?"

"You've hit it, monsieur," said Gaudissart.

"I've hit it!"

"You consent to push me in the district?"

"In the district."

"I have your approbation?"

"You have it."

"Well, then, monsieur, I take your wine at a hundred francs—"

"No, no! hundred and ten—"

"Monsieur! A hundred and ten for the company, but a hundred to me. I enable you to make a sale; you owe me a commission."

"Charge 'em a hundred and twenty; that's plenty," said the fool.

"That's a rhyme!"

"About the wine—"

"Better and better! why, you are a poet."

"I am a poet," said the fool. "Come out and see my vineyards."

"Willingly, the wine is getting into my head," said the illustrious Gaudissart, following Monsieur Margaritis, who marched him from row to row and hillock to hillock among the vines. The three ladies and Monsieur Vernier, left to themselves, went off into fits of laughter as they watched the traveler and the lunatic discussing, gesticulating, stopping short, resuming their walk, and talking vehemently.

"I wish the good-man hadn't carried him off," said Vernier.

Finally the pair returned, walking with the eager step of men who were in haste to finish up a matter of business.

"He has got the better of the Parisian, damn him!" cried Vernier.

And so it was. To the huge delight of the lunatic our illustrious Gaudissart sat down at a card-table and wrote an order for the delivery of the two casks of wine. Margaritis, having carefully read it over, counted out seven francs for his subscription to the "Children's Journal" and gave them to the traveler.

"Adieu until to-morrow, monsieur," said Gaudissart, twisting his watch-key. "I shall have the honor to call for you to-morrow. Meantime, send the wine at once to Paris to the address I have given you, and the price will be remitted immediately."

Gaudissart, however, was a Norman, and he had no idea of making any agreement which was not reciprocal. He therefore required his promised supporter to sign a bond (which the lunatic carefully read over) to deliver two puncheons of the wine called "Head of Vouvray," vineyard of Margaritis.

This done, the illustrious Gaudissart departed in high feather, humming, as he skipped lightly along—

> "The King of the South,
> He burned his mouth," etc.

V.

THE illustrious Gaudissart returned to the "Golden Sun," where he naturally conversed with the landlord while waiting for dinner. Mitoufle't was an old soldier, guilelessly crafty, like the peasantry of the Loire; he never laughed at a jest, but took it with the gravity of a man accustomed to the roar of cannon and to make his own jokes under arms.

"You have some very strong-minded people here," said Gaudissart, leaning against the door-post and lighting his cigar at Mitouflet's pipe.

"How do you mean?" asked Mitouflet.

"I mean people who are rough-shod on political and financial ideas."

"Whom have you seen? if I may ask without indiscretion," said the landlord innocently, expectorating after the adroit and periodical fashion of smokers.

"A fine, energetic fellow, named Margaritis."

Mitouflet cast two glances in succession at his guest which were expressive of chilling irony.

"May be; the good-man knows a deal. He knows too much for other folks who can't always understand him."

"I can believe it, for he thoroughly comprehends the abstruse principles of finance."

"Yes," said the innkeeper, "and for my part, I am sorry he is a lunatic."

"A lunatic! What do you mean?"

"Well, crazy—cracked, as people are when they are insane," answered Mitouflet. "But he is not dangerous; his wife takes care of him. Have you been arguing with him?" added the pitiless landlord; "that must have been funny!"

"Funny!" cried Gaudissart. "Funny! Then your Monsieur Vernier has been making fun of me!"

"Did he send you there?"

"Yes."

"Wife! wife! come here and listen. If Monsieur Vernier didn't take it into his head to send this gentleman to talk to Margaritis!"

"What in the world did you say to each other, my dear, good monsieur?" said the wife. "Why, he's crazy!"

"He sold me two casks of wine."

"Did you buy them?"

"Yes."

"But that is his delusion; he thinks he sells his wine, and he hasn't any."

"Ha!" snorted the traveler, "then I'll go straight to Monsieur Vernier and thank him."

And Gaudissart departed, boiling over with rage, to shake the ex-dyer, whom he found in his salon, laughing with a company of friends to whom he had already recounted the tale.

"Monsieur," said the prince of travelers, darting a savage glance at his enemy, "you are a scoundrel and a blackguard; and under pain of being thought a turnkey—a species of being far below a galley-slave—you will give me satisfaction for the insult you dared to offer me in sending me to a man whom you knew to be a lunatic! Do you hear me, Monsieur Vernier, dyer?"

Such was the harangue which Gaudissart prepared as he went along, as a tragedian makes ready for his entrance on the scene.

"What!" cried Vernier, delighted at the presence of an audience, "do you think we have no right to make fun of a man who comes here, bag and baggage, and demands that we hand over our property, because, forsooth, he is pleased to call us great men, painters, artists, poets—mixing us up gratuitously with a set of fools who have neither house nor home, nor sous nor sense? Why should we put up with a rascal who comes here and wants us to feather his nest, by subscribing to a newspaper which preaches a new religion whose first doctrine is, if you please, that we are not to inherit from our fathers and mothers? On my sacred word of honor, Père Margaritis said things a great deal more sensible. And now, what are you complaining about? You and Margaritis seemed to understand each other. The gentlemen here present can testify that if you had talked to the whole canton you couldn't have been as well understood."

"That's all very well for you to say; but I have been insulted, monsieur, and I demand satisfaction!"

"Very good, monsieur! consider yourself insulted, if you like. I shall not give you satisfaction, because there is neither rhyme nor reason nor satisfaction to be found in the whole business. What an absurd fool he is, to be sure!"

At these words Gaudissart flew at the

GAUDISSART.

"On seeing him everybody would say: 'Ah! there's the illustrious Gaudissart.'"

dyer to give him a slap on the face, but the listening crowd rushed between them, so that the illustrious traveler only contrived to knock off the wig of his enemy, which fell on the head of Mademoiselle Clara Vernier.

"If you are not satisfied, monsieur," he said, "I shall be at the 'Golden Sun,' until to-morrow morning, and you will find me ready to show you what it means to give satisfaction. I fought in July, monsieur."

"And you shall fight in Vouvray," answered the dyer; "and what is more, you shall stay here longer than you imagine."

Gaudissart marched off, turning over in his mind this prophetic remark, which seemed to him full of sinister portent. For the first time in his life the prince of travelers did not dine jovially. The whole town of Vouvray was put in a ferment about the "affair" between Monsieur Vernier and the apostle of Saint-Simonism. Never before had the tragic event of a duel been so much as heard of in that benign and happy valley.

"Monsieur Mitouflet, I am to fight to-morrow with Monsieur Vernier," said Gaudissart to his landlord. "I know no one here: will you be my second?"

"Willingly," said the host.

Gaudissart had scarcely finished his dinner before Madame Fontanieu and the assistant-mayor of Vouvray came to the "Golden Sun" and took Mitouflet aside. They told him it would be a painful and injurious thing to the whole canton if a violent death were the result of this affair; they represented the pitiable distress of Madame Vernier, and conjured him to find some way to arrange matters and save the credit of the district.

"I take it all upon myself," said the sagacious landlord.

In the evening he went up to the traveler's room carrying pens, ink, and paper.

"What have you got there?" asked Gaudissart.

"If you are going to fight to-morrow," answered Mitouflet, "you had better make some settlement of your affairs; and perhaps you have letters to write—we all have beings who are dear to us. Writing doesn't kill, you know. Are you a good swordsman? Would you like to get your hand in? I have some foils."

"Yes, gladly."

Mitouflet returned with the foils and masks.

"Now, then, let us see what you can do."

The pair put themselves on guard. Mitouflet, with his former prowess as grenadier of the guard, made sixty-two passes at Gaudissart, pushed him about right and left, and finally pinned him up against the wall.

"The deuce! you are strong," said Gaudissart, out of breath.

"Monsieur Vernier is stronger than I am."

"The devil! Damn it, I shall fight with pistols."

"I advise you to do so; because, if you take large holster pistols and load them up to their muzzles, you can't risk anything. They are *sure* to fire wide of the mark, and both parties can retire from the field with honor. Let me manage all that. Hein! *sapristi*, two brave men would be arrant fools to kill each other for a joke."

"Are you sure the pistols will carry *wide enough?* I should be sorry to kill the man, after all," said Gaudissart.

"Sleep in peace," answered Mitouflet, departing.

The next morning the two adversaries, more or less pale, met beside the bridge of La Cise. The brave Vernier came near shooting a cow which was peaceably feeding by the roadside.

"Ah, you fired in the air!" cried Gaudissart.

At these words the enemies embraced.

"Monsieur," said the traveler, "your joke was rather rough, but it was a good one for all that. I am sorry I apostrophized you: I was excited. I regard you as a man of honor."

"Monsieur, we take twenty subscriptions to the 'Children's Journal,'" replied the dyer, still pale.

"That being so," said Gaudissart,

"why shouldn't we all breakfast together? Men who fight are always the ones to come to a good understanding."

"Monsieur Mitouflet," said Gaudissart on his return to the inn, "of course you have got a sheriff's officer here?"

"What for?"

"I want to send a summons to my good friend Margaritis to deliver the two casks of wine."

"But he has not got them," said Vernier.

"No matter for that; the affair can be arranged by the payment of an indemnity. I won't have it said that Vouvray outwitted the illustrious Gaudissart."

Madame Margaritis, alarmed at the prospect of a suit in which the plaintiff would certainly win his case, brought thirty francs to the placable traveler, who thereupon considered himself quits with the happiest region of sunny France —a region which is also, we must add, the most recalcitrant to new and progressive ideas.

On returning from his trip through the southern departments, the illustrious Gaudissart occupied the coupé of a diligence, where he met a young man to whom, as they journeyed between Angoulême and Paris, he deigned to explain the enigmas of life, taking him, apparently, for an infant.

As they passed Vouvray the young man exclaimed, "What a fine site!"

"Yes, monsieur," said Gaudissart, "but not habitable on account of the people. You get into duels every day. Why, it is not three months since I fought one just there," pointing to the bridge of La Cise, "with a damned dyer; but I made an end of him—he bit the dust!"

SCENES OF CITY LIFE.

I.

THE SELIM SHAWL.*

To be able to sell, to be willing to sell, and to sell! The public little suspects how much grandeur Paris owes to these three aspects of the same problem.

The brilliance of the shops, as rich as the salons of the nobility before 1789; the splendor of the cafés, which often eclipses, and very easily, that of the Neo-Versailles; the poem of the window shows demolished every night and built up again every morning; the elegance and grace of the young men in communication with the fair purchasers; the seductive physiognomies and the dresses of the young girls who are to attract the male buyers; and finally, nowadays, the depths, the immense space, and the Babylonian luxury of the galleries in which the shop-keepers monopolize particular trades by combining them—all this is nothing! As yet it is only a question of pleasing the most insatiable and the most sated organ which has been developed in man since the days of Roman society, and whose avidity has become unbounded—thanks to the efforts of the most refined civilization. This organ is *the eye of the Parisians!* This eye consumes a hundred thousand francs' worth of fireworks, variegated glass palaces two kilomètres long by sixty feet high, fairy pieces at fourteen theaters every evening, ever-changing panoramas, continual exhibitions of *chefs-d'œuvre*, worlds of grief and universes of joy walking about on the boulevards or wandering in the streets, encyclopedias of rags at the *carnaval*, twenty illustrated works a year, a thousand caricatures, ten thousand vignettes, lithographs, and engravings. This eye burns fifteen thousand francs' worth of gas every evening; in short, to satisfy it, the city of Paris annually expends several millions in fine sites and plantations. And still this is nothing; it is only the material side of the question. Yes, to us, all this is a trifle in comparison with the efforts of skill, the stratagems worthy of Molière, employed by the sixty thousand shopmen and the fifty thousand shop-girls, who fasten on to the purse of the purchasers, like the thousands of little fishes on to the pieces of bread which float on the waters of the Seine.

The stationary Gaudissart is at least equal in ability, in art, in mockery, and in philosophy, to the illustrious bagman who has become the type of his tribe. Out of his shop and his business, he is like a balloon without gas. He derives his faculties only from the goods around him; like the actor, he is only sublime on the stage. Although the French shopman is relatively better informed than the other shopmen of Europe; although he can at least talk about asphalte, the *bal Mabile*, the polka, literature, illustrated books, railways, politics, the Chambers, and revolution, he is excessively stupid when he leaves his shop-board, his yard measure, and his graces to order; but there, at the edge of the counter, the words on his lips, his eye on the customer,

* Gaudissart II.

the shawl in his hand, he eclipses the great Talleyrand. He has more wit than Desaugiers, more tact than Cleopatra; he is equal to Monrose multiplied by Molière. At home, Talleyrand would have imposed on Gaudissart; but, in his shop, Gaudissart would have taken in Talleyrand.

Let me explain this paradox by a fact.

Two lovely duchesses were prattling by the side of this illustrious prince. They wanted a bracelet. They were expecting, from the most celebrated jeweler's in Paris, a shopman and some bracelets. A Gaudissart arrives, furnished with three bracelets—three marvels—between which the two women hesitate. To choose there must be a flash of intuition! Do you hesitate? All is said. You are mistaken. Taste never has two inspirations. At last, after ten minutes, the prince is consulted. He sees the two duchesses struggling with the thousand facets of uncertainty between the two most stylish of the jewels — for one of them had been put aside at first sight. The prince does not leave off reading—he does not look at the bracelets; he examines this shopman. "Which would you choose for your sweetheart?" he asks him. The young man points out one of the jewels. "In that case, take the other. You will insure the happiness of two women," says the most astute of modern diplomatists. "And you, young man, make your sweetheart happy in my name." The two pretty women smile, and the shopman retires, as much flattered by the present the prince has just made him as by the good opinion he entertains of him.

A lady gets out of her brilliant carriage, stopped in the Rue Vivienne, before one of those sumptuous shops where they sell shawls. She is accompanied by another lady. Women almost always go in couples on this sort of expedition. They all, in like cases, go through ten shops before making up their minds; and, in the intervals between one and the other, they laugh at the little comedy got up for them by the shopmen. Let us examine which plays his or her part best, the buyer or the seller—which of the two gets the best of it in this little vaudeville.

When we have to paint the greatest achievement of Parisian commerce, the sale, we must condense the subject and produce a type. Now, in this respect, a shawl or a chatelaine of a thousand crowns will cause more emotions than a piece of cambric or a dress of three hundred francs. But, O foreigners of the two worlds! if you happen to read this physiology of the bill to pay, know that this scene is played in all the drapers' shops over a barege at two francs or a printed muslin at four francs a yard.

How should you be on your guard, princesses or commoners, against the good-looking, rosy young man, with downy and peach-colored cheeks, with truthful eyes, dressed nearly as well as your—your—cousin, and endowed with a voice as soft as the fabric he spreads before you? There are three or four in that style: one with black eyes and decided mien, who says, "There!" with an imperious air; another with blue eyes and timid ways, with soft speech, of whom you say, "Poor boy! he was not born for business;" one, light chestnut, with laughing yellow eyes, pleasing address, and endowed with Southern activity and gayety; another tawny red, with a fan-shaped beard, stiff as a Methodist, severe, imposing, with an irresistible necktie, and brief of speech.

These different species of shopmen, which correspond with the principal varieties of women, are the arms of their master—a big fellow, with a broad face, a bald forehead, a ministerial deputy's corporation, sometimes decorated with the Legion of Honor for having maintained the superiority of French trade, presenting an outline of satisfactory rotundity, having a wife, children, a country house, and an account at his banker's. This personage descends into the arena after the manner of a *Deus ex machina*, when the plot becomes too complicated and requires a sudden *dénouement*. Thus the women are surrounded with good nature, with youth, with cajoleries, with smiles, with jests, with everything that civilized humanity

offers most simple and most deceitful, the whole arranged in shades to suit all tastes.

A word upon the natural effect of optics, architecture, and decoration; a word short, sharp, and terrible; a word which is history written on the spot. The book in which you read this instructive page is sold at No. 76, Rue de Richelieu, in an elegant shop, white and gold, hung with red velvets, which possessed a room on the *entresol* (mezzanine floor) upon which the light came full from the Rue de Menars, and came as it does to a painter, pure, clear, and always equal. What *flaneur* has not admired the Persian, that Asian king who struts at the angle of the Rue de la Bourse and the Rue de Richelieu, charged to tell *urbi et orbi*, "I reign more quietly here than at Lahore." In five hundred years, this figure at the corner of two streets might, without this immortal analysis, occupy the archæologists, and be the subject of volumes in quarto with engravings, like that of Monsieur Quatremeu on the Olympian Jupiter, in which it was demonstrated that Napoleon had somehow been a sophi in some Oriental country before being emperor of the French. Well, this rich warehouse laid siege to this poor little *entresol;* and, by force of bank-notes, it got possession of it. The COMÉDIE HUMAINE had to give way to the Comedy of *Cachemires*. The Persian sacrificed some of the diamonds of his crown to obtain the necessary daylight. This ray of sunlight increased the sale cent per cent, by its influence on the effect of color. It brings out in relief the seductions of the shawls; it is an irresistible light; it is a golden ray. From this fact, judge of the scenic effect in all the shops in Paris!

Let us return to the young men, to the decorated man of forty received by the king of the French at his table, to the head shopman with red beard and autocratic air. These veteran Gaudissarts have matched themselves against a thousand caprices a week; they know all the vibrations of the *cachemire* chord in the feminine heart. When a *lorette*, a respectable lady, a young mother of a family, a *lionne*, a duchess, a good housewife, a brazen dancer, an innocent girl, or a too innocent foreigner present themselves, each of them is immediately analyzed by these seven or eight men, who have studied her from the moment she put her hand on the cane handle of the shop door, and who are stationed at the windows, at the counter, at the door, in a corner, in the middle of the shop, apparently contemplating the joys of a festive Sunday. On looking at them you even ask yourself, What can they be thinking about? A woman's purse, her desires, her intentions, her fancies, are more thoroughly hauled over in a moment than a suspected carriage is hauled over at the frontier by the custom-house officers in seven-quarters of an hour.

These intelligent fellows, serious as a heavy father, have seen everything: the details of the costume, an invisible stain of mud on the boot, an old-fashioned style, a bonnet-string dirty or in bad taste, the cut and making of the dress, the newness of the gloves, the dress cut out by the intelligent scissors of Victorine IV., the jewelry of Froment-Meurice, the fashionable bauble—in short, everything about a woman which could betray her rank, her fortune, and her character. Tremble! Never is this Sanhedrim of Gaudissarts presided over by the master mistaken. Then the ideas of each one are transmitted from one to the other with telegraphic rapidity, by looks, by nervous twitches, by smiles, by movements of the lips, which, on observing them, you would liken to the sudden lighting up of the grand avenue of the Champs Elysées, when the gas flies from lamp to lamp, just as this idea lights up the eyeballs from shopman to shopman.

And immediately, if it is an Englishwoman, the serious Gaudissart, mysterious and irresistible, advances like a romantic character of Lord Byron's.

If it is a shopkeeper, they send her the oldest of the shopmen. He shows her a hundred shawls in a quarter of an hour; he bewilders her with colors and patterns; he unfolds her as many shawls as a kite describes circles over a rabbit; and, at the end of half an hour, the worthy wo-

man, thoroughly muddled and not knowing which to choose, refers it to the shopman, who puts her between the two horns of this dilemma and the equal attractions of two shawls: "This one, madame, is very becoming—it is applegreen, the fashionable color; but the fashion changes; while this one" (the black or the white, the sale of which is urgent) "you will never see the end of, and it can be worn with any dress."

This is the A B C of the trade.

"You would never believe how much eloquence is required in this beast of a business," said the first Gaudissart of the establishment, recently, while talking to two of his friends, Duronceret and Bixiou, who had come to buy a shawl, leaving the choice to him. "Look here, you are discreet artists; I can talk to you about the tricks of our principal, who is, certainly, the cleverest man I ever saw. I don't say as a manufacturer—Monsieur Fritot is the first—but as a salesman he invented the Selim shawl, *a shawl which is not to be sold*, and which we always sell. We keep in a cedar box, very plain, but lined with satin, a shawl worth five or six hundred francs, one of the shawls sent by Selim to the Emperor Napoleon. This shawl is our imperial guard: we bring it forward when the case is desperate; *it sells and never dies*."

At this moment, an Englishwoman descended from her hired carriage, and appeared in the perfection of the phlegm peculiar to England and all its productions supposed to be animated. You would have said, the statue of the Commander walking with certain jerks—of an awkwardness manufactured at London in every family with a national particularity.

"The Englishwoman," whispered he in Bixiou's ear, "is our battle of Waterloo. We have women who slip through our fingers like eels—we catch them again on the stairs; *lorettes* who humbug us—we laugh with them, we get hold of them by credit; undecipherable foreigners who have several shawls taken home for them, and with whom we get on by smothering them with flattery; but the Englishwoman—it is like attacking the bronze of the statue of Louis XIV. These women make a business and a pleasure of bargaining. They actually trot us out."

The romantic shopman had come forward.

"Does madame wish for an Indian shawl or a French one, expensive or—"

"I will see."

"What sum does madame devote?"

"I will see."

In turning round to get the shawls and place them on a dummy, the shopman gave his colleagues a significant look (what a bore!), accompanied by an imperceptible shrug of the shoulders.

"These are our finest qualities in Indian red, in blue, in orange yellow; they are all ten thousand francs. Here are the five thousand and the three thousand ones."

The Englishwoman, with sullen indifference, looked through her eyeglass at everything around her before looking at the three exhibitions, without giving a sign of approbation or disapprobation.

"Have you any others?" she asked.

"Yes, madame. But perhaps madame has not quite decided to have a shawl?"

"Oh, quite decided."

And the shopman went to fetch some shawls of a lower price; but he spread them out solemnly, like things of which you seem to say, "Attention to these splendors!"

"These are much dearer," said he. "They have never been worn. They are brought to us by couriers, and are bought direct of the manufacturers of Lahore."

"Oh! I understand," said she. "They suit me much better."

The shopman remained serious, notwithstanding his internal irritation, which caught Duronceret and Bixiou. The Englishwoman, still as cool as watercresses, seemed to rejoice in her phlegm.

"What price?" said she, pointing out a sky-blue shawl, covered with birds stuck in pagodas.

"Seven thousand francs."

She took the shawl, put it on, looked at herself in the glass, and said, returning it, "No, I don't like it."

A good quarter of an hour passed in these fruitless essays.

"We have nothing else, madame," said the shopman, looking at his principal.

"Madame is particular, like all persons of taste," said the head of the establishment, coming forward with those shop graces in which the pretentious and the coaxing are agreeably mingled.

The Englishwoman took her eyeglass and examined the manufacturer from head to foot, without pleasing to comprehend that the man was eligible and dined at the Tuileries.

"I have only a single shawl left, but I never show it to anybody," continued he. "Nobody finds it to their taste. It is very out of the way; and, only this morning, I was thinking of giving it to my wife. We have had it ever since 1805; it comes from the Empress Josephine."

"Let me look at it, sir."

"Go and fetch it," said the master to the shopman; "it is in my room."

"I shall be very glad to see it," replied the Englishwoman.

The reply was quite a triumph, for this splenetic woman had appeared on the point of going away. She made a pretense of looking only at the shawls, while she was hypocritically examining the shopmen and the two purchasers, screening her eye behind the frame of her eyeglass.

"It cost sixty thousand francs in Turkey, madame."

"Oh!"

"It is one of the seven shawls sent by Selim, before his catastrophe, to the Emperor Napoleon. The Empress Josephine —a Creole, as miladi knows, and very capricious—exchanged it for one of those brought by the Turkish ambassador, which my predecessor had bought; but I have never been able to get the price for it, for, in France, *our ladies* are not rich enough. It is not like England. This shawl is worth seven thousand francs, which would certainly represent fourteen or fifteen with compound interest. Here it is, madame."

And the master, taking precautions that the exhibitors of the *Grüne-gewoelbe* of Dresden would have admired, opened with a miniature key a square cedar box, the shape and simplicity of which made a great impression on the Englishwoman. From this box, lined with black satin, he took out a shawl worth about fifteen hundred francs, of a golden yellow, with a black pattern, whose brightness was only surpassed by the absurdity of the Indian design.

"Splendid!" said the Englishwoman. "It is really handsome. This is my ideal of a shawl. It is very magnificent. . . "

The rest was lost in the Madonna attitude she fell into to show off her lack-luster eyes, which she thought handsome.

"The Emperor Napoleon liked it very much. He wore it."

"Very," she repeated.

She took the shawl, arranged it on her shoulders, and examined herself. The master took back the shawl, came to the light to show it off, pulled it about, and made it glisten; he played on it like Liszt plays on the piano.

"It is very fine, beautiful, sweet!" said the Englishwoman, with the calmest air.

Duronceret, Bixiou, and the shopman exchanged looks of pleasure which signified "The shawl is sold."

"Well, madame?" asked the shopkeeper, seeing the Englishwoman absorbed in a sort of contemplation infinitely too much prolonged.

"Decidedly," she said, "I prefer a carriage."

The same start animated the silent and attentive shopmen, as if they had received a shock from the electric fluid.

"I have a very handsome one, madame," quietly answered the master. "I had it from a Russian princess, the Princess Narzicoff, who left it with me in payment for goods. If madame would look at it, she would be astonished. It has not been out ten days, and there is not one like it in Paris."

The stupefaction of the shopmen was restrained by their profound admiration.

"I am quite willing," answered she.

"If madame will keep the shawl on," said the master, "she will see how it looks in the carriage."

The master went to get his hat and gloves.

"How will it end?" said the head shopman, seeing his master offering his hand to the Englishwoman, and going off with her in the hired *calèche*.

For Duronceret and Bixiou this incident had all the attraction of the wind-up of a novel, besides the special interest attaching to all contests, however insignificant, between England and France. Twenty minutes afterward, the master returned.

"Go the Hôtel Lawson; here is the card—Mistress Noswell. Take the bill I am going to give you; there are six thousand francs to receive."

"And how have you managed?" said Duronceret, saluting this king of bill-makers.

"Why, sir, I had reckoned up this eccentric style of woman. She likes to be remarked. When she saw that everybody was looking at her shawl, she said to me, 'Decidedly, keep your carriage, sir; I will keep the shawl.' While Monsieur Bigorneau," said he, pointing to the romantic shopman, "was showing her the shawls, I was examining miladi. She was ogling you to know what opinion you had of her; she was a great deal more taken up with you than with the shawls. The English have a peculiar distaste (for you cannot call it a taste); they don't know what they want, and make up their minds to have a thing they are bargaining for from some accidental circumstance rather than from choice. I recognized one of those women tired of their husbands and their brats, virtuous but discontented, seeking emotions, and always planted like weeping willows."

This is literally what was said by the head of the establishment. Which proves that in a shopkeeper of any other country there is only a shopkeeper, while in France, and above all in Paris, there is a man who has been to a royal college, educated, fond either of art, or fishing, or the theater, or devoured with the desire of becoming the successor of Monsieur Cunin-Gridaine, or a colonel in the National Guard, or a member of the Consul-General of the Seine, or a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce.

"Monsieur Adolphe," said the shopkeeper's wife to the little fair shopman, "go and order a cedar box at the fancy shop."

"And," said the shopman, while reconducting Duronceret and Bixiou, who had chosen a shawl for Madame Schoutz, "we must look among our old shawls for the one that is to play the part of the Selim shawl."

II.

PERE GORIOT.

I.

On the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, between the Latin Quarter and the Faubourg Saint Marceau, in Paris, stood a boarding-house, kept by Madame Vauquer. During the forty years in which she had been its mistress, the house had always borne a reputation for the highest respectability. For the last thirty years young people had rarely found shelter within its aged walls, but at the time when our story opens, in 1819, a young girl might be found among its inmates.

Although the *locale* of our story may sometimes extend beyond the limits of Paris, yet the interest of the drama will be found in the limited space between the heights of Montmartre and Montrouge, in that valley where no effect is now produced by any sensation which is out of the ordinary, since it has already witnessed so many powerful emotions; that valley where the Car of Juggernaut, in

the form of the chariot of civilization, rolls on, regardless of the hearts which may lie crushed in its path. And this drama with which we now have to do is no fiction, no romance; it is simple, veritable fact.

Madame Vauquer's boarding-house stood in the lower part of the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, at a place where the descent to the Rue Arbalete was so steep that horses and carriages rarely found their way up and down the hill. The place was silent and deserted, and grass grew between the stones in the street, along which the domes of the Val de Grace and the Pantheon cast gloomy shadows; the walls were like those of a prison; the sound of a carriage was an unwonted occurrence, and the place seemed to be given up to sadness and gloom; the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, in particular, was like a heavy frame of bronze, destined to inclose the somber tints and gloomy fancies of our story.

There was a little garden in front, which the house faced, thus causing it to stand at right angles with the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve; there was, between the house and garden, a narrow, sanded path, which was bordered with vases of blue and white faience, in which were growing geraniums, rose-laurels and pomegranate trees. Over the door which opened upon this path was a sign:

MAISON VAUQUER,

and in smaller letters, beneath, were the words:

BOARDING-HOUSE.

On the wall, opposite the street, was painted an arch, supposed to represent green marble, below which was a statue of Love, which was losing some of its varnish. The little square garden, containing all these works of art, was surrounded by a high wall, covered with a wealth of ivy, which grew in such luxuriance as to attract the attention of all who saw it, so rare in Paris was the picturesque effect.

There were also fruit trees and vines growing against the walls, and the fruit which they might produce was a never-failing subject of speculation and anxiety for Madame Vauquer and her guests, in the season for it. At the end of a small path which went along the wall was a small grove of lindens, shading a round table and several seats, where the boarders were in the habit of enjoying their coffee, in the dog-days, notwithstanding the excessive heat of the spot.

The house was three stories high, with a mansard. The front of it was built of stone, and painted that shade of yellow in which Paris abounds. Each story had five windows, composed of little square panes of glass, the blinds of which were never drawn up alike. There was a small courtyard behind the house, where chickens, pigs and rabbits lived together in a friendly way; a small gate led from this to the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve.

A drawing-room, a dining-room and a kitchen composed the ground floor; the drawing-room had two windows, protected with bars, and looking out upon the street; the dining-room was separated from the kitchen by a passage and some stairs, whose steps showed plentiful scrubbing and little paint.

The appearance of the drawing-room was melancholy and forlorn; the furniture was of horse-hair, and was worn and ragged; the floor was dilapidated and uneven; the paper on the walls was varnished, and represented scenes from Telemachus; a fire was always laid in the stone fireplace, but never lighted, and above it was a blue marble clock, on either side of which were vases of dusty, artificial flowers. The room produced a depressing and chilling effect, which was still further increased by the "boarding-house odor" which filled it, that odor which is an accumulation of smells, and which is like nothing else.

But the dining-room beyond made this room, dismal and unattractive as it was, seem like a dainty and sweet-scented boudoir, in comparison. The paint was ornamented by dirt in fantastic patterns; old, empty bottles and piles of thick crockery stood upon the sticky sideboard; the furniture consisted of those

indestructible articles which, after having reached a certain point of decay, seemed able to survive all further attacks of time; it consisted of weak chairs, miserable little mats, which were half unraveled, Argand lamps, filled with equal parts of oil and dust, rusty old foot-stoves without any hinges, wretched engravings in black wooden frames, and a long oilcloth-covered table. Everything was old, half worn out, tottering, covered with dust and dirt, broken down and perishing. There was not a gleam of poetry to lighten the penurious wretchedness.

At seven o'clock in the morning this room was in its full glory, and Madame Vauquer's cat entered it upon a tour of investigation, jumping upon the sideboards and sniffing at the bowls of milk which were covered by plates, to guard against her depredations.

Her mistress soon followed her. Madame Vauquer was a plump little woman who was aging rapidly. She had on a tulle cap, from which hung a curl of false hair. Her face was fresh and sharp, like the first autumnal frosts; her nose, like a parrot's beak, protruded from her plump face; with her poorly fitting slippers, and her ragged petticoat, through whose rents little tufts of the wadded lining were sticking out, she harmonized perfectly with the room in which she stood, and the house of which she was mistress. She was a part of the place, as a jailer is a part of his prison. She was an epitome of the drawing-room, the dining-room and the kitchen, and presumably of the boarders also.

She was a woman of fifty years or more, who knew how to keep a sharp lookout over her own interests; but her boarders all acknowledged that she was "good-hearted," and put implicit faith in her moans and laments regarding her poverty. She never had much to say on the subject of the late lamented Monsieur Vauquer, simply stating, when hard pressed, that he had been unfortunate, and had lost all his money, leaving her with only this house to live in, and depriving her of the power of sympathizing with others, since she herself had already suffered all that was possible for one human being to endure.

When Sylvia, the fat cook, heard her mistress's step, she made haste to serve the breakfast for the regular boarders. There were some day-boarders, but they did not appear until dinner, as that arrangement cost them only thirty francs a month.

At the time when this story begins, the boarders in the house only numbered seven. The best rooms were on the first floor. The smaller of these was occupied by Madame Vauquer, and the other was rented by Madame Couture, who was the widow of an intendant commissary of the French Republic; a young lady named Victorine Taillefer lived with her, and was like a daughter to her. These ladies paid Madame Vauquer eighteen hundred francs for their board.

An old man named Poiret occupied one of the apartments on the second floor; the other was taken by a man about forty years old, who wore a black wig, described himself as a retired lawyer, and called himself Monsieur Vautrin.

The third floor had four rooms; an old lady named Mademoiselle Michonneau occupied one; an old man whom every one called Pere Goriot, a manufacturer of vermicelli, Italian pastes and starch, also had one.

The other two rooms were for transients; poor students, who could not afford to give more than forty-five francs a month for their board and lodging. Madame Vauquer did not particularly care for this class of lodger, and never took them when she could do better; she thought they ate more than their money's worth; but at the time of which we are writing one of these rooms was occupied by a young man named Eugene de Rastignac, who had come from the neighborhood of Angoulême to Paris, to pursue his law-studies, followed by the prayers and blessings of a numerous family, who cheerfully endured all sorts of privations for the sake of being able to send him twelve hundred francs a year. And fortunately for them, he appreciated their sacrifices, and did his best to deserve them.

There was a garret above this third floor, and over that were the mansards, where Sylvia, the fat cook, and Christopher, the man of all work, slept. Besides the regular boarders, there were eight or nine students of law and medicine, and two or three people of the neighborhood, who came regularly for their dinner. The dining room was capable of seating eighteen, or even twenty, but there were never any except the seven regular boarders at breakfast. They always came down comfortably in their slippers, to what was like a family repast; they discussed the outside boarders at their leisure, and expressed their opinions with all the freedom of intimacy.

These seven boarders were Madame Vauquer's spoiled children, and she graduated her attentions to them with a delicate nicety which was exactly proportioned to the amount that they paid her each month.

The dilapidated costumes of the inhabitants exactly corresponded to the desolate appearance of the interior of the house. The color of the men's coats had become a matter for doubt and speculation; the proper place for their boots was in the rubbish heap, and their linen was dilapidated and wornout. The dresses of the women were long since out of date, and were either dyed or faded, or both; their laces were old and made over, their gloves were slippery with use, and their collars and fichus were frayed out. Their very bodies, as well as their clothes, gave evidence of long usage; their frames were solidly built, their constitutions had met and resisted many a tempest, and their faces were hard, battered, blurred and defaced, like wornout money.

They seemed like actors in some drama —not on a mimic stage before a painted curtain, but on the stage of life itself, with its living interests and its ceaseless motion.

Mademoiselle Michonneau wore over her weak old eyes a dirty shade made of green cloth and brass wire, which would have frightened away the Angel of Pity himself; the angles of her bony figure were so plainly outlined beneath her dingy shawl with its thin, infrequent fringe, that she seemed little more than a skeleton. Her gaze was cold enough to make one shiver, and the aspect of her face was repellent and menacing. One could not help wondering what the bitter experiences of her life had been, which had passed over her like a storm, and withered all her youthful attractions and graces; for in spite of the ravages of time, her face and figure both showed traces of past beauty. There was a report that she had once nursed an old man who had been abandoned by his children, and who was mortally ill, and that in payment of her services, and as a mark of his gratitude, he had left her an annuity of a thousand francs, her possession of which was periodically and unsuccessfully disputed by the disappointed heirs.

Monsieur Poiret resembled nothing so much as a wornout piece of machinery. As he glided like a colorless shadow along the paths in the Jardin des Plantes, with a limp little cap on his head, the yellowed ivory top of his cane loosely clasped in his hand, his withered little blue-stockinged legs disclosed by his floating coat, and trembling like those of a drunken man, his white waistcoat soiled and his shirt-frill crumbled, people wondered if this odd figure really belonged to the same race with those sons of Japhet who promenaded upon the Italian boulevard.

What could have been the occupation or toil which had thus shriveled him up? What were the passions which had thus darkened his face—that face which would have been pronounced unreal, had it been drawn as a caricature? Who and what had he been? Perhaps he had been one of the employés at the Department of Justice, whose duty it had been to make up the expense account of black veils for parricides, or bran for the baskets and cords for the knives of the guillotine; or he might have been a receiver at the doors of some mammoth slaughter-house. He seemed to be one of those necessary sacrifices which are utilized by the great social mill of life to grind its daily grist —a sort of Parisian Raton, who had not

even the satisfaction of knowing his Bertrand—a pivot upon which the life about him had revolved, and to which its misfortunes and uncleanness had clung like vestments. A being, in short, which might be termed a necessary evil.

These faces, grown pale with moral or physical suffering, are unknown to fashionable Paris; but Paris is like the ocean. When its depths are sounded, they will constantly yield fresh discoveries and unknown, unsuspected regions filled with flowers, pearls or monsters, as a reward for literary divers. And one of these unexplored regions, these unknown monstrosities, was the Maison Vauquer.

Two of the people in the house formed a decided contrast to the rest of the boarders. One of them was Mademoiselle Victorine Taillefer, who, although harmonizing with the sadness and sorrow of the place, by a habitual melancholy, a mournful expression and a poverty-stricken and delicate appearance, was yet different from her companions, for she was not old, and her movements and voice were flexible; she was like a bush which had been planted in uncongenial soil, whose leaves were yellow and withering for want of proper nourishment, rather than a decaying tree, already tottering with age. She was beautiful, by contrast with her surroundings, with her fresh face, her blonde hair, her slender figure, her sweet, dark-gray eyes, full of Christian resignation, and her simple, inexpensive clothing which hung so gracefully about her youthful form. She would have been irresistibly charming if she had only been happy; she might have challenged comparison with all the world, if the joys of a happy home had reflected their rosy tints upon her pale face, if the sweetness of life could have lent some color to those hollowed cheeks, and if love could have brightened those sad eyes.

Her story was like a romance; her father had given her up, repudiating her utterly, allowing her only six hundred francs a year for her support, and even converting all his property into ready money, so that he might be able to leave it unreservedly to his other child—a son. Madame Couture, who was a distant relative of her mother's, had adopted the girl, and had done the best she could for the girl, bringing her up to go to mass and confession regularly, like a good daughter of the Church. But, unfortunately, the lady had nothing except her dowry and her pension, and the young girl, so helpless and inexperienced, was likely to be left at any time, alone in the world.

The fruits of Victorine's religious training were shown in the fact that she truly and unaffectedly forgave her father all his neglect, and sought reconciliation with him at every opportunity, but only to be repulsed with scorn.

Her brother was the only human being to whom she could look as a mediator, and he had not been near her for four years; but in spite of this desertion and heartlessness, she was always ready with gentle words of forgiveness and excuse, whenever her protectress and Madame Vauquer abused her unnatural, hard-hearted parent, which they did at every opportunity, and always in the fiercest terms which the language could furnish.

The young student, Eugene de Rastignac, had a southern face, with a white skin, black hair and blue eyes, and his high-bred lineage was betrayed by his figure, manner and easy grace. While ordinarily economical with his clothes, he could, if necessary, appear as elegantly as any young man of the period; but he usually contented himself with an old coat, a disreputable waistcoat, a miserable black cravat, faded and badly tied, wretched pantaloons and patched boots.

Vautrin, with his forty years, stood as the connecting link between these two and the rest of the company. He was what is called a jolly fellow. He was large and well-developed, with strong, broad shoulders and square, thick, hairy hands. His voice, a counter-tenor, harmonized with his loud-toned heartiness, but there were hard lines in his face which contradicted the affable and complaisant effect of his usual manner. He was always merry and obliging, and if any little thing about the house got out of order, he at once came to the rescue,

taking apart, oiling, tacking and setting back in place with the greatest ease. He seemed to be well informed upon every subject, and he was even good-natured enough to lend small sums occasionally to his fellow-boarders or his landlady.

But in spite of his bonhomie, there was a certain hardness and imperturbability about the man which made his debtors feel that they would rather die than fail to pay him his due, to the uttermost farthing; a something which gave the impression that he could be hard and cruel as death, and that he would not stop at anything in order to accomplish his ends.

Every day after breakfast he went out, returning in time for dinner, and going again for the whole evening, rarely returning before midnight, when he let himself in with a latchkey which he alone, of all the boarders, possessed; for he stood high in the graces of the landlady, whom he did not hesitate to flatter and cajole.

He either knew or guessed at the private affairs of every one with whom he came in contact, and no one knew any more of him than he chose to betray, ensconced as he was behind the barrier of his gayety and apparent good-fellowship.

Occasionally a biting sarcasm against society and its laws, or some satire worthy of Juvenal himself, gave the idea that he bore a bitter and constant grudge against some one or something, and that beneath the surface of his life there was a deep, unsolved mystery.

Attracted, perhaps unconsciously, now by the strength of the one, and now by the beauty of the other, Mademoiselle Taillefer bestowed her shy glances and her secret thoughts equally upon the quadragenarian and the young student; but neither of them appeared to devote a thought to her, although she was young and pretty, and might any day, by a turn of Fortune's wheel, become an heiress and an eligible *partie*.

None of these people disturbed themselves to any extent with the affairs or misfortunes of the others; they had their own woes to think about, and their stock of sympathy only sufficed for their own troubles; they had none to spare for their neighbors. Any one of them could have calmly passed by a blind person in the street, listened without emotion to the story of his misfortunes, and doubtless would have looked upon his death as the best and only solution of the miserable problem of existence.

Madame Vauquer was the happiest of all the desolate souls in this asylum. To her alone the little garden, with its heat and its cold, its dryness and its damp, was like a laughing grove. For her alone the yellow, mournful house had its delights. As it was the place over which she presided, in her opinion all those who were so fortunate as to be its inmates were heartily and unfeignedly to be congratulated.

II.

THE assemblage described in the last chapter is like an epitome of society; and society always has its scapegoat, its butt, at whom jests and sarcasms may be hurled with impunity.

At the commencement of Eugene de Rastignac's second year in this place, the unfortunate individual who occupied this position, and whose figure stood out in boldest relief from those of his fellow-boarders, was the old vermicelli-maker, Pere Goriot.

Just why this half-disdainful scorn, this persecution mingled with pity, this utter want of respect for age and misfortune, had fallen upon the oldest member of this little company, is one of the mysteries of social injustice. It is human nature to desire to try its strength upon some one or something; and the more long-suffering and unresisting the victim, the safer the experiment.

Pere Goriot was an old man of sixty-nine years or thereabouts. He had taken up his abode at Madame Vauquer's when he retired from business in 1813. At first he rented the apartment afterward occupied by Madame Couture, for which he paid twelve hundred francs, always with

the air of a man to whom five louis, more or less, was a mere trifle. Pere Goriot, at this stage of affairs, was respectfully termed Monsieur Goriot; he brought with him an excellently appointed wardrobe, over which Madame Vauquer gloated admiringly, noting attentively the eighteen shirts of fine linen, the two diamond studs, and the limitless number of white waistcoats, over which his heavy gold chain loaded with trinkets was wont to hang. He wore a blue-bottle coat, and carried a gold snuff-box, containing a medallion full of hair; this caused Madame Vauquer to rally him upon being a giddy fellow; whereupon he would smile with the pleased look of a man whose hobby has been gently flattered.

His closets were filled with the numerous pieces of silver plate which he had brought with him, and the widow's eyes shone as she helped him unpack and arrange the gravy-spoons, the plates and saucers, and all his former household gods which he had chosen to keep. They were the relics of his domestic life, and very precious to him.

"Look," he said, holding out to Madame Vauquer a porringer whose cover was adorned with two turtle-doves billing each other, "my wife gave this to me on the first anniversary of our marriage; she had devoted all her girlhood's savings to it, and I would rather dig in the dirt for a living than part with it. But, God be praised, I have a competency, and can take my coffee out of this little porringer every morning, to my life's end!"

Madame Vauquer ascertained further, with prudent shrewdness, from the best authorities, that this excellent man had an income of from eight to ten thousand francs, and from that day the worthy widow, who only acknowledged to thirty-nine years, although she might lawfully have claimed a dozen more, laid her little plans.

Monsieur Goriot's eyes were continually moist to overflowing, but she conceived an ardent admiration for his face and person; she also discerned congenial moral qualities in him which were predicted by his shapely legs and long square nose, and amply confirmed by his round and frankly credulous face. In spite of a little want of polish in his manner, he was so extremely well dressed and took his snuff with such a wealthy air, inhaling it like a man who is sure of always having his box full of the very best maccaboy, that, on the night of the day when Monsieur Goriot installed himself under her roof, Madame Vauquer went to bed burning with the desire to abandon the name of Vauquer, and adopt that of Goriot. To marry; to sell the boarding-house; to take the well-clothed arm of this most desirable man; to become a person of consequence in the neighborhood; to patronize the poor; to get up little excursions to Soissy or Gentilly; to go to the theater and sit in a box—a perfect Eldorado of delights unrolled itself before her dazzled imagination as she turned and re-turned in her bed. Unknown to any, she had saved forty thousand francs; so that she felt herself a suitable match for the prospective bridegroom, and murmured, with a comfortable consciousness of her own value:

"I am as good as he, at all events."

For the next three months the Widow Vauquer devoted herself to the end in view, plunging recklessly into little toilet expenses, excusable under the circumstances, and maneuvering with all the art which she possessed to raise the tone of her house, only admitting those lodgers who had the very best of references, and who appeared to harmonize with the rank of its most honored guest.

She sent out prospectuses headed, "MAISON VAUQUER," which claimed it to be "one of the oldest and most esteemed boarding-houses of the Latin Quarter; having a most delightful view over the valley of the Gobelins" (which could be perceived from the fourth floor), "and a beautiful garden, at the end of which *extended a* LINDEN WALK."

They also expatiated upon the good air and the solitude of the place.

This prospectus attracted the Countess Ambermesnil, a lady twenty-six years old, who was anxiously awaiting the ter-

mination of a lawsuit, and the regulation of a pension which was due her, as the widow of a general who had fallen on the field of battle.

Madame Vauquer paid attention to her table, kept a fire lighted in the room, and so successfully redeemed the promises of her prospectus, that the countess enthusiastically engaged to persuade two of her friends, the Baroness de Vaumerland, and the widow of Count Picquoiseau, ladies who were likewise in search of pensions, to transfer themselves and their belongings from their present boarding-place to Madame Vauquer's mansion.

The ladies were in the habit of ascending to Madame Vauquer's room after dinner, and there, over their currant-wine and sweetmeats, they had many a cozy little confab.

On one of these occasions they discussed Madame Vauquer's designs upon Monsieur Goriot, of which her friend fully approved, and which she declared she had foreseen and desired from the day of her arrival.

The countess kindly criticised Madame Vauquer's appearance, which she thought was hardly in harmony with her ambitions.

"You must be better fitted for the combat," she said.

After numerous calculations, the two widows set forth together to the Palais Royal, where they bought a plumed hat and a bonnet, and then the countess enticed her friend to a shop where they chose a dress and a scarf. Arrayed in these implements of war, Madame Vauquer viewed the rather startling effect with much satisfaction, and felt so much indebted to the countess for her advice and assistance, that, though not naturally of a lavish disposition, she begged her to accept a hat worth twenty francs. She counted upon her friend to open the delicate subject with Monsieur Goriot, and to sound his views upon the matter. This mission Madame de l'Ambermesnil willingly undertook, and succeeded in obtaining an interview with the old man; but she found him modest, not to say refractory. He evidently considered her attempts as so many wiles put forth on her own account, to lure him to herself, and she came away disgusted with his stupidity.

"My dear," she said to her friend, "you will never succeed with that man! He is ridiculously suspicious, and a miserable old miser; he would only make you unhappy."

The interview had been such an unpleasant one that the countess disliked to remain any longer in the same house with the man, and she accordingly departed on the following day, forgetting in her haste to pay the six months' rent which was due, and leaving as its equivalent cast-off clothes to the value of five francs. Although Madame Vauquer made diligent efforts, she never could obtain any satisfaction from her departed lodger.

She often referred to this unfortunate experience, deploring her too-confiding nature; although, really, she was naturally intensely suspicious. But, like many other people, she was always more ready to suspect intimate friends than comparative strangers, being led on by the hope that there might be a chance to gain something from new friends, or to impose upon them a belief in her own excellences; while nothing of this sort was possible where she was thoroughly known and understood, and consequently all pretense of frank trust and confidence was useless and misplaced.

"If I had been here," said Monsieur Vautrin to her, "this would not have happened. I would soon have unmasked her. I know their tricks!"

Madame Vauquer was prone to judge events, rather than causes, and preferred to visit upon others the consequences of her own faults.

When she met with this mishap, she looked upon the honest vermicelli-maker as the author of all her misfortunes, and proceeded to vent her spite upon him accordingly. As soon as she had become thoroughly convinced that her darling hopes had no foundation, and that her enticements and expensive efforts were of no avail, her aversion became stronger

than her friendship had ever been ; for her hatred was caused, not by disappointed love, but by disappointed ambition.

The human heart occasionally finds repose while mounting to the heights of affection, but it rarely pauses on the steep descending slopes of hatred.

As long as Monsieur Goriot was one of the inmates of her establishment, however, she was obliged to stifle her rancor, and to swallow her desire for vengeance as best she might. Nevertheless, there are a thousand petty ways of secretly venting spite, and the widow was an adept in the art.

She began by retrenching the superfluous luxuries which had found their way into the house of late.

"We will have no more pickles and anchovies; they are nothing but impositions!" she said to Sylvia, on the morning when she decided to return to her old programme.

Monsieur Goriot was, from long habit, an exceedingly frugal man, desiring nothing but the simplest and plainest food, and she found it impossible to disturb him in this way. Her next attempt was to disparage him in the eyes of his fellow-boarders, and thus to attain her vengeance through their means.

At the end of the first year, the widow began to ask herself why a man who possessed an income of eight thousand francs, a superb amount of silver plate, and a quantity of beautiful jewels, should be staying at her house, and paying a yearly amount of board so little in accordance with his fortune.

During the greater part of this year, Monsieur Goriot had dined away from home once or twice a week; but little by little he had formed the habit of dining out only once or twice a month. This new arrangement did not by any means suit Madame Vauquer, from motives of economy ; and she took it into her head that it was done for the sake of spiting her, as well as on account of a gradual diminution of her fortune. She was capable of acting from little motives herself, and she was only too ready to attribute them to others.

At the end of the second year Monsieur Goriot justified the gossip of which he had been the object, by asking to be accommodated with a room on the second floor and a reduction of rent, and he was obliged to practice such strict economy that he was unable even to afford a fire in his room during the winter ; and simultaneously, with his fall from prosperity, he became only Pere Goriot.

Everybody made guesses at the cause of this, but nobody knew the truth, for, as the false countess had declared, the man was close-mouthed and taciturn. Some, and among others Vautrin, who came to the house about this time, ascribed it to gambling at the Bourse ; others accused him of a mild species of gambling, the sort of play where a man gains or loses not more than ten francs or so in an evening ; now he was declared to be a usurious miser, and now a patronizer of lotteries ; they came at length to suspect him of all vices and all mysteries ; but bad as he was, he was not yet bad enough to be turned out of the house, for he paid his board regularly. And besides that, he was useful as a scapegoat for all the good or bad humor of the establishment.

But everybody finally adopted Madame Vauquer's opinion, which was, that he was an old wretch ; and these are the facts upon which they based their opinion :

Some time after the departure of the countess, who had lived so cleverly for six months at the expense of Madame Vauquer, that good lady heard, early one morning, the rustling of a silk dress on the staircase, and the light step of a young girl who was making her way to the apartment of Père Goriot, the door of whose room opened intelligently at the moment. Immediately Sylvia appeared, with the information that a young girl, beautiful as an angel, and wearing glossy little prunella boots, which were guiltless of mud, had glided like an eel from the street into the kitchen, and asked to be shown the way to Monsieur Goriot's room.

Madame Vauquer and her cook devoted themselves to the key-hole, and plainly

distinguished several tender words; the visit lasted some time, and when Monsieur Goriot accompanied the lady out, Sylvia took up her basket immediately, and pretended to be on her way to market, as an excuse for following the devoted couple.

"Madame," she said, breathlessly, as soon as she had returned, "Monsieur Goriot must be immensely wealthy, after all. Just think! At the corner of the next street there stood a most superb carriage, which she entered!"

That day at dinner, Madame Vauquer rose to draw a curtain, so that Monsieur Goriot should not be disturbed by a ray of sunlight which was streaming directly into his eyes.

"You are favored, Monsieur Goriot," she said: "the sun seeks you out." This was a covert reference to the visit he had received. Then she added boldly: "You have good taste, she was exceedingly pretty."

"It was my daughter," he said, with a sort of pride, which the other boarders viewed only as an ineffectual attempt to keep up appearances.

A month after this visit, Monsieur Goriot received another. His daughter, who had before come in morning toilet, arrived this time after dinner, and dressed for society. The boarders, talking together in the drawing-room, had a good view of her, and saw a pretty blonde girl with a slender, graceful figure, much too *distingué* to be the daughter of one like Pere Goriot.

"Two of them!" ejaculated the fat cook, who did not recognize the girl.

A few days later, another young lady, tall and well made, a brunette, with black hair and piercing eyes, asked for Monsieur Goriot.

"That makes the third!" said Sylvia.

This second daughter, whose first visit had also been paid in the morning, came again after several days, in a carriage, and dressed for a ball.

"Four of them!" exclaimed Madame Vauquer and Sylvia, who neither of them recognized in this grand lady the girl who had been so simply dressed on the morning when she had paid her first visit.

Monsieur Goriot still paid twelve hundred francs a year, and Madame Vauquer thought it best not to refer to these mysterious visitors of his; but when he paid only nine hundred francs, she deemed it high time to inquire insolently what he meant by bringing these persons into her house.

"They are my daughters," he answered her mildly.

"Have you then thirty-six daughters?" inquired the landlady, sarcastically.

"I have only two," he replied, with the meek submission of a ruined man; and she let him alone for awhile.

At the end of the third year Pere Goriot reduced his expenses still further, mounting to the third floor, and paying only forty-five francs a month. He gave up snuff, dispensed with his hair-dresser, and used no more powder.

The first time he appeared unpowdered, his hostess uttered a cry of surprise at the color of his hair, which was of a dirty greenish gray; enough in itself to confirm her and all the others in their opinion that he was an old wretch who had led a bad life.

The state of the poor old man gave some excuse for all this gossip. As his clothes wore out, he bought calico at fourteen sous a yard, to replace his fine linen; his diamonds, his snuff-box, his chain and his jewels went one by one. His blue-bottle coat had long since disappeared, as well as all the rest of his luxurious costume, and he now wore, summer as well as winter, a coat of coarse chestnut-colored cloth, a waistcoat made of goat's hair, and gray woolen pantaloons.

He grew thinner every day; his well-shaped legs shrunk, his face, formerly puffed out with contentment, grew wrinkled with marvelous speed; his forehead became creased and lined, and his jaws prominent; and in the fourth year of his residence at the Maison Vauquer, he had ceased entirely to look like the fat, hearty, well-fed, and smiling vermicelli-manufacturer who had come there to live so short a time before, and was, instead, a wan, trembling, wornout septuagenarian. Even his eyes had changed their

color from a bright blue to a dull, faded gray. They had ceased to be watery, and their red borders looked now as if they wept blood instead of tears.

The folorn old man inspired some with horror, and others with pity; young medical students, noting the fall of his lower lip, and the summit of his facial angle, hinted at symptoms of idiocy, after they had railed at him for a long time without getting a word in reply.

After dinner one evening Madame Vauquer said to him mockingly, and as if casting a doubt upon his paternity:

"So your daughters never come to see you any more!"

The old man started as if he had been struck with a dagger.

"Sometimes they come," he replied, his voice stifled with emotion.

"Ah, ha! so you still see them sometimes!" cried the students. "Bravo, Pere Goriot!"

The object of their railleries paid no attention to them; he had fallen again into that thoughtful, meditative state which superficial observers term the lethargy of old age. And so he lived among them, alone and unknown. Those whose curiosity was feebly awakened never sought information concerning him, for they never went out of the neighborhood, living like oysters on a rock, and those who did mingle with the world cared to know nothing about him, forgetting the miserable old object of their mockeries the moment he was out of their sight.

As for the young girls whom he had called his daughters, every one shared the opinion of Madame Vauquer, who remarked, with unanswerable logic:

"If Pere Goriot had daughters who were as rich as those ladies who have been here to see him, he would not be living on the third-floor of my house, at forty-five francs a month, and dressed like a pauper."

This was something that nobody felt able to deny.

Toward the end of the month of November, 1819, at the time when our story opens, everybody had a settled opinion of the poor old man; which was, that he was a miserable wretch who had led a wicked life, and was now dragging out the last days of his existence like a snail in its shell, a comfort neither to himself nor anybody else.

III.

Eugene de Rastignac's ideas of the great world had undergone radical changes since he came to Paris. In the first year of his sojourn there his studies left him leisure to explore the novelties about him; and a young student in Paris who seeks to know the *repertoire* of each theater, to study the various outlets of the great Parisian labyrinth, and to learn the language and habituate himself to the particular pleasures of the capital has no lack of occupation.

During his successive initiations, however, his ideas gradually changed; the horizon of his life grew broader, and he realized to a fuller extent the differences in the human strata which compose society. He began by admiring the carriages in the Champs Elysées, and ended by envying them.

When he went home for his vacation he was in this frame of mind.

His childish illusions and provincial ideas had disappeared, and he was better able to view his family affairs as they really were. His father, mother, two sisters, two brothers, together with an aunt, whose sole support consisted in her pensions, lived together on the family estate of Rastignac. This estate yielded an income of three thousand francs a year, more or less uncertain according to the state of the vineyard, which was its principal factor; and out of this little sum twelve hundred francs had to be saved each year to send to him.

Their constant poverty and distress, which they sought so generously to conceal from him, the comparison which he could not help making between his sisters, who had seemed so beautiful to him only a year ago, and the Parisian ladies who had realized his utmost dreams of love-

liness, and the strict economy which attended the slightest proceedings—all increased tenfold his desire to succeed, and made him long to distinguish himself.

Like all great souls, he wanted to owe everything to his own merit, and yet his Parisian experience had opened his eyes to such an extent that he could not help seeing how much depends on patronage, and what an influence women have over social life; and he suddenly resolved to throw himself into society, and to gain a patroness; surely help would not be refused to an ardent, intelligent young man, especially when these qualities were supported by an elegant figure and a strong, nervous beauty particularly agreeable to women.

These meditations took firm hold of him, and the subject was continually on his mind. His aunt, Madame de Marcillac, had formerly moved in the very best society, and it suddenly occurred to the ambitious young man that some of her acquaintances might be available in introducing him to his new field of action; he therefore questioned her on the subject of possible loosened bonds of relationship which might be reknotted.

The old lady shook the branches of the genealogical tree, and gathered from it that, of all the individuals who might, perhaps, serve her nephew among the selfish race of rich relations, Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauseant would possibly be the least reluctant. She accordingly wrote a letter to this young lady, couched in ancient, stately terms, which she gave to Eugene, telling him at the same time that through her he would probably find his other relatives. A few days after his arrival, he presented his aunt's letter to Madame de Beauseant, and received in return an invitation to a ball which she was about to give.

He returned through the silent streets to the Maison Vauquer, about two o'clock in the morning, after attending the ball. He succeeded in entering the house without disturbing any one, for old Christopher, in the act of locking up for the night, put his head out of the door for a farewell look, just as Eugene arrived before it; so he was able to make his way upstairs undetected, Christopher's clumsy footsteps covering his lighter ones. He took off his dress-suit, put on his slippers and an old coat, lighted his fire of turfs, and prepared himself for work; for, in order to make up for lost time, he purposed devoting the remaining hours of the night to study.

Before he plunged into work, however, he sat motionless before his books for a few moments, lost in dreamy retrospection of the events of the evening.

The Vicomtesse de Beauseant was one of the leaders of Parisian society, and her house had the reputation of being one of the most agreeable in the Faubourg Saint Germain. Thanks to his old aunt, he had been most kindly received there, and he scarcely yet realized how much that meant to him; for admission to the salons of the Vicomtesse de Beauseant was equivalent to brevet-rank in Parisian society; once received there, he had conquered the right to be admitted everywhere.

He had met there a young lady who had strongly attracted him at first sight, and who would have been noticeable in any assembly. Tall and well-made, the Comtesse Anastasie de Restaud had the reputation of possessing one of the most beautiful figures in Paris. Her large black eyes, her magnificently shaped hand, and slender, arched foot, and a certain fiery grace of movement, made her what, in a horse, would have been termed thoroughbred. Rastignac joined the knot of cavaliers around her, succeeded in putting his name in two places upon her card, and even had the happiness of conversing with her during the first quadrille.

"Where can I see you again, madame?" he asked her, with that abruptness of passion which so often takes a woman by storm.

"Oh," she said carelessly, "in the Bois, at the play, at my house—everywhere!"

The young man made the most of the opportunities for acquaintance which were afforded him by a quadrille and a waltz,

and, as a cousin of Madame de Beauseant, was invited to call upon her in her own home. He met with a gentleman soon afterward, a kindly, simple man, Marquis de Montriveau, who gave him the information he wanted; namely, the address of the Comtesse de Restaud, which proved to be in the Rue du Helder.

He therefore found himself just launched upon the world, with the *entrée* of two of the best houses in Paris, and already on the road to acquaintance and perhaps friendship with one of the most charming women whom he had ever seen. What young man would not have sat and dreamed of all this, regardless of his turf fire and the law-books spread out before him?

His wandering thoughts were dwelling on the pleasures which a further acquaintance with Madame de Restaud would bring to him, when a heavy sigh suddenly trembled through the silence of the night and startled him as effectually as if it had been the last rattle in the throat of a dying man.

Softly opening his door, he went out into the passage, where he saw a line of light under Pere Goriot's door. Fearing his neighbor was ill, he stooped down and looked through the key-hole, and what he saw in the room made him feel that he would not be fulfilling his duty to society if he did not examine into the remarkable, if not criminal, proceedings of the old *soi-disant* vermicelli-maker.

Pere Goriot, who appeared to have attached to the crossbar of an overturned table a plate and a little soup-tureen of silver-gilt, had passed a piece of heavy rope around these richly chased articles, and was drawing it tightly enough to twist them, probably with the intention of converting them into bullion.

"Upon my word! what a man!" thought Rastignac, as he watched the strong arms which, with the aid of the cord, noiselessly kneaded the gilded silver as if it had been dough. "Can the fellow be a thief, or a receiver of stolen goods, who, the better to conceal his nefarious occupation, pretends to be stupid and helpless, and lives like a beggar?" and Eugene, straightening up for a moment, applied his eye once more to the key-hole.

Pere Goriot, who had now undone the cord, took up the mass of silver, and after having spread the covering upon the table, laid the roll upon it, proceeding immediately to fashion and round it into a bar, an operation which he performed with marvelous facility and adroitness.

"He is as strong as Augustus, king of Poland," thought Eugenie, as the bar took form and roundness.

When he had finished, Pere Goriot looked sadly at his work, while tears gathered in his eyes; then he blew out the wax-taper which had lighted him while he manipulated the silver, and Eugenie heard him sigh heavily as he extended himself upon his bed.

"He is crazy," thought the student.

"Poor child!" said Pere Goriot, aloud.

And as he heard the words, Rastignac decided to say nothing of the affair, and to refrain from condemning his old neighbor too hastily. He was about to return to his room when he suddenly heard a slight noise, difficult to define, but which might have been produced by the footsteps of men in list slippers, ascending the stairs. Eugene listened attentively, and distinctly heard the breathing of two men; and, then, without the sound of an opening door, or of footsteps, he suddenly saw a feeble light on the second floor at Monsieur Vautrin's room.

"A boarding-house is a mysterious place!" he said to himself.

He went down several steps of the staircase, and stood there listening, when the sound of money struck his ear. In a minute or two the light was extinguished, and the breathing of the two men was heard anew, but there was still no sound of an opening door. Then, as the men descended the stairs, the slight noise grew feebler, and finally died away.

"Who is that?" cried Madame Vauquer, opening the window of her room.

"It is only I coming in, madame," said Vautrin, in his loud voice.

"That is very strange! Christopher bolted the door," said Eugene to himself, re-entering his room. "A man must keep

his eyes open to know what is going on around him in Paris."

Being disturbed in his dreams of ambition and love by these little events, he set to work; but, distracted in his attention by suspicions of Pere Goriot, and still more by visions of Madame Restaud, who seemed every other moment to stand before him and beckon him on to a brilliant destiny, he finally flung himself on his bed and went sound asleep.

The next morning Paris was enveloped in one of those thick, brown fogs which seem to make people lose all account of time; when it is noon, it seems as if it ought to be only eight o'clock in the morning. At half-past nine Madame Vauquer had not stirred from her bed, and Christopher and the fat cook, also belated, were tranquilly taking their coffee, diluted with those upper skimmings of the milk which had been designed for the boarders.

"Sylvia," said Christopher, meditatively soaking a bit of toast, "two men came here last night to see Monsieur Vautrin. He is a good fellow, and there is no need to say anything to madame about it."

"Did he give you anything?"

"A hundred sous, as much as to say: 'Hold your tongue!'"

"Except him and Madame Couture, who are not niggardly, all of them would like to take away with the left hand what they give with the right," grumbled Sylvia.

"And what do they give, after all!" said Christopher: "a stingy little coin, or a paltry hundred sous. Pere Goriot has been cleaning his boots himself for the last two years. That old miser Poiret does without wax, and would sooner drink it than put it on his shoes; and as for the student, he only gives me forty sous. Why, forty sous do not even pay for my brushes; and he sells his old clothes, into the bargain. What a hole of a place!"

"Oh, come!" said Sylvia, sipping her coffee leisurely; "after all our places are the best in the neighborhood; you know that as well as I do. But," she added, "apropos of Monsieur Vautrin, Christopher, has anybody said anything to you about him?"

"Yes," replied the other; "I met a gentleman on the street a few days ago, who asked me some awkward questions about his character and habits; but I denied everything. I told Monsieur Vautrin of it afterward, and he said I had done exactly right."

"Well," said Sylvia, in a tone of comfortable gossip, "the same thing happened to me at the market the other day. But, of course, I did not know anything either. Listen!" she added, suddenly interrupting herself; "there is the church clock striking a quarter of ten, and not a soul in the house is stirring yet!"

"They have all gone out. Madame Couture and her young friend went to communion at Sainte Etienne at eight o'clock. Pere Goriot went out with a bundle, and the student will not come in until ten o'clock. I saw them all go, while I was doing the stairs; and as Pere Goriot passed me, his package hit against my shoulder, and it felt as hard as iron. I wonder what the poor old man has done," he went on, meditatively; "the others knock him about like a top, and yet he is a good old fellow, and worth all the rest of them put together. He does not give very much himself, but he sends me on errands to ladies who sometimes give famous fees."

"Those whom he calls his daughters, eh? He has about a dozen of them!"

"I have never seen but two—the same who have been here."

"There is madame at last; she will be calling, and I must go. Keep an eye on the milk, Christopher, on account of the cat;" and Sylvia went up to her mistress.

"How is this, Sylvia? Here it is a quarter of ten, and you have let me sleep like a log. Such a thing never happened before."

"It is the fault of the fog, madame. It is thick enough to cut with a knife."

"But the breakfast?"

"Your boarders don't seem to care anything about their breakfast this morn-

ing. You can all breakfast together at ten o'clock. Mademoiselle Michonneau and Monsieur Poiret are the only ones left in the house, and they haven't stirred yet."

"It is very strange, Sylvia," observed Madame Vauquer, changing the subject, "how Monsieur Vautrin got into the house last night, after Christopher had bolted the door."

"Not at all, madame," returned the other. "Christopher heard Monsieur Vautrin, and went down to let him in. And that is what you thought was—"

"Hand me my wrapper, and go and see about the breakfast as quickly as you can," said her mistress, interrupting her. "You may chop up what is left of the mutton, with some potatoes, and put on some stewed pears, the kind that cost a half a sou apiece."

A few minutes later Madame Vauquer went downstairs, just in time to see the cat overturn with one stroke of her paw the plate which covered a bowl of milk, and hastily lap up the contents of the dish.

"You scamp!" she cried. The cat ran for dear life, but in a minute or two was back again, rubbing against her skirts as if nothing had happened.

"Oh, yes! now play the hypocrite, you old coward!" she said; then raising her voice, she called: "Sylvia! Sylvia!"

"What is it, madame?"

"See what this cat has done!"

"It is all Christopher's fault! I told him to look out for the cat. Where has he gone? Never mind, ma'am, it was only the milk for Pere Goriot's coffee, and he never will know the difference if I put a little water in it. He never takes any notice of what he eats."

"By the way, where has the old man gone?" asked Madame Vauquer, beginning to lay the plates.

"That is more than anybody knows," returned Sylvia, mysteriously.

"I have slept too long," said her mistress, in a tone of conviction.

"Oh, but Madame is as fresh as a rose—"

She was interrupted by the ringing of the bell, and Vautrin entered the room, singing in his loud voice:

> "J'ai longtemps parcouru le monde,
> Et l'on m'a vu de toute part."

Then, seeing his hostess, he added:

"Ah, good-morning, Madame Vauquer;" at the same time gallantly putting his arm around her buxom waist.

"Come, stop that!" she said in an indulgent tone.

"Call me impertinent!" he retorted. "Come, say it! Won't you say it? Here, I am going to put my plate by yours. Ah! I am a pretty fellow, am I not?

> "'To court the brunette and the blonde'—

"I have just seen something very odd—

> "'—by chance.'"

"What was it?" asked the widow.

"Pere Goriot, at half-past eight in the morning, in the Rue Dauphine, in the shop of the goldsmith who buys old gold and silver. He had sold to him at an excellent price a piece of silver-gilt plate, which was very prettily twisted up, considering he is only an amateur at the business."

"No! Did you really?"

"Yes, really! I was on my way back after having been to take leave of one of my friends, who was going away on the stage-coach. I waited to see where Pere Goriot went, just for the joke of the thing. He came back into this neighborhood, to the Rue des Gres, and stopped at the house of a money-lender, named Gobseck—a queer old fellow, half Jew, half Greek."

"And what did he do there?" asked Madame Vauquer, breathlessly.

"What every one does in such a place," replied Vautrin. "What a fool he is, to ruin himself for—"

"There he is!" cried Sylvia, suddenly.

"Christopher," said Pere Goriot, as he entered, "come upstairs with me for a minute."

Christopher followed the old man, but soon came down again.

"Where are you going?" demanded his mistress, as he appeared.

"Going on an errand for Monsieur Goriot."

"What have you got there?" asked Vautrin, snatching from Christopher's hand a letter, on which he read:

"'To Madame la Comtesse Anastasie de Restaud.'

"And where is it to go?" he asked, returning the letter to the servant.

"To the Rue du Helder. I have orders to deliver this into the hands of Madame la Comtesse herself."

"What is in it?" asked Vautrin, taking the letter again and holding it up to the light. "A bank-note? No!" He half opened the envelope. "A receipted bill!" he cried. "Upon my word, the old fellow does things in good style! Go now!" he added, giving Christopher a slap on the back which sent him staggering across the floor. "You will get a fine *pourboire* for that."

The table was ready; Sylvia boiled the milk while Madame Vauquer lighted the fire in the little stove, aided by Vautrin, who was softly humming the while:

"J'ai longtemps parcouru le monde,"
Et l'on m'a vu de toute part."

Just as everything was ready Madame Couture and Mademoiselle Taillefer came in.

"And where have you been this morning?" asked Madame Vauquer.

"To Saint Etienne du Mont, as a fitting preparation for a fresh attempt, which we purpose making to-day, to induce Victorine's father to grant us an interview," said Madame Couture. "Poor child, she is trembling like a leaf," continued the good woman, sitting down before the little stove, and putting out her feet.

"Come and warm yourself, Victorine," said Madame Vauquer.

"It is all very well, mademoiselle, to pray God to soften your father's heart," said Vautrin, bringing up a chair for the young girl, "but you ought nevertheless to have some friend who would not be afraid to speak his mind to the old hog, who, they say, has three millions, and who will not even give his daughter a dowry; and no matter how pretty a girl is, a dowry is a very necessary thing nowadays."

"Poor child!" said Madame Vauquer. "Well, my dear, your father will reap the reward of his wickedness some day."

Victorine's eyes filled with tears, and Madame Couture made a little sign to the landlady, which stopped further remarks of that nature.

"If he would only consent to see us," resumed the widow of the intendant-commissary; "if I could only speak to him, only give him his wife's last letter, which she wrote to him on her death-bed, and which I have never dared trust to the mail, since he knows my writing—"

"Oh, innocent women, unhappy and persecuted!" cried Vautrin, interrupting her; "is that how the matter stands? I will help you to manage the affair, and everything will be all right."

"Oh! sir," said Victorine, casting a tearful and glowing look at Vautrin, who was not in the least moved by it, "if you have any way of getting at my father, I entreat you to tell him that his affection and the honor of my mother are more to me than all his wealth. If you can soften his heart, I will pray God to bless you; and my gratitude—"

"J'ai longtemps parcouru le monde,"

sung Vautrin, in an ironical voice.

Goriot, Mademoiselle Michonneau, and Poiret just then came down, attracted, perhaps, by the odors of cooking; and as they bade each other good-morning, the clock struck ten, and the steps of the student were heard approaching.

IV.

EUGENE DE RASTIGNAC greeted his fellow-boarders, and seated himself near Pere Goriot.

"I have just had a singular adventure," he said, helping himself bountifully to the mutton, and cutting off a piece of bread of which Madame Vauquer took the measure with an avaricious eye.

"An adventure!" said Poiret.

"And what is there so remarkable in that?" demanded Vautrin of the luckless Poiret. "Monsieur de Rastignac is just the man who would be expected to have adventures."

Mademoiselle Taillefer glanced timidly at the young student.

"Tell us about it," demanded Madame Vauquer.

"Last night I was at a ball at the house of my cousin, the Vicomtesse de Beauseant, who has a magnificent mansion, elegantly furnished, and who gave a superb entertainment, at which I was as happy as a king—"

"I doubt it!" said Vautrin, interrupting him abruptly.

"Sir!" said Eugene, quickly, "what do you mean?"

"I say that I doubt it," returned the other, composedly, "because even the birds are happier than kings."

"That's so! I would rather be a bird than a king, because—" began Poiret, who always agreed with everybody.

He was, however, unceremoniously interrupted by the student, who resumed:

"I danced with one of the most beautiful ladies there, a charming countess, the most delicious creature I ever saw. She had peach-blossoms in her hair, and she carried the most beautiful bouquet of flowers—but there! you ought to have seen her, for it is impossible for any description to do her justice. Well, this morning I met this divine countess, about nine o'clock, on foot, in the Rue des Gres. Oh! how my heart beat! I thought—"

"That she was coming here!" said Vautrin, casting a meaning look at the student. "On the contrary, she was without doubt on her way to see Monsieur Gobseck, the money-lender. If ever you fathom the hearts of Parisian women, you will find the money-lender there before the lover. The name of your countess is Anastasie de Restaud, and she lives in the Rue du Helder."

At this name, the student looked fixedly at Vautrin. Pere Goriot suddenly raised his head and cast upon the two speakers a look of intelligence and of deep distress which surprised the little company.

"Christopher will get there too late, and she will have gone!" he cried, with a wail.

"I have guessed it," said Vautrin softly, leaning over and speaking in Madame Vauquer's ear.

The next moment Goriot was mechanically going on with his breakfast, with a manner as absent-minded as ever.

"Who in the world, Monsieur Vautrin, ever told you her name?" demanded Eugene.

"Ah, ha! That is the question?" replied Vautrin. "Pere Goriot knows it perfectly well; why should not I?"

"Monsieur Goriot!" cried the student, in astonishment.

"Ah!" said the poor old man; "so she was very beautiful yesterday?"

"Who?"

"Madame de Restaud."

"Just look at the old wretch," said Madame Vauquer, aside to Vautrin, "see how his eyes glisten!"

"Oh, yes, she was tremendously beautiful," replied Eugene, at whom Pere Goriot was gazing eagerly. "If Mademoiselle de Beauseant had not been there, my divine countess would have been queen of the ball. Even as it was, the young men seemed to have no eyes for any one save her; and my name was the twelfth on her list. She danced every dance; and all the other women were furiously jealous. She was happy last night if any one was. It has been well said that there is nothing more beautiful than a ship under full sail, a horse at a gallop, and a woman dancing."

"Yesterday, at the top of the heap, at the house of a duchess," observed Vautrin; "this morning at the foot of the ladder, at the house of a sharper; there is a true Parisian woman for you! If their husbands cannot support them in their immoderate luxury, they will resort to almost any means for the sake of maintaining it; everybody knows that!"

The face of Pere Goriot, which had been radiant while the student was talking, suddenly clouded at this remark.

"Well!" said Madame Vauquer, impatiently, "where is your adventure? did you speak to her? did you ask her if she wanted to study law?"

"She did not see me at all," said Eugene. "But to meet one of the most beautiful women in Paris on the Rue des Gres at nine o'clock in the morning; a woman who cannot have returned from a ball before two o'clock at night, is rather singular. There is no place like Paris for adventures!"

"Bah! there are many more interesting ones than that," observed Vautrin, contemptuously.

Mademoiselle Taillefer paid very little attention to this conversation, so preoccupied was she with the thought of the trial before her. Madame Couture now made a sign to her; and when the two ladies left the room, Pere Goriot followed their example.

"Well! did you see him?" asked Madame Vauquer triumphantly of Vautrin and her other guests. "Is it not clear now that he has ruined himself for her?"

"I will never believe," cried the student, "that the beautiful Comtesse de Restaud has anything to do with Pere Goriot."

"It is of no consequence," said Vautrin, interrupting him, "whether you believe it or not. You are yet too young to know Paris; but when you have seen more of it you will find that there is a certain class of men who have only one idea. They thirst for water drawn only from a paticular fountain. For some of them this fountain is gambling, the Bourse, music, or a collection of pictures or insects; for others, it is a woman, and they will sacrifice everything in the world, to their last sou, for her sake.

"Pere Goriot is one of this kind; the countess may not care anything for him, but you can see for yourself that the poor man thinks only of her. Aside from this one passion, he is a brute, a beast; but put him on this subject, and his face sparkles like a diamond. It is not difficult to guess to-day's riddle; he carried some silver plate to be melted this morning, and I saw him enter Gobseck's, in the Rue des Gres. Now listen! As soon as he got back here he sent that old idiot, Christopher, to the Comtesse de Restaud. He showed us the address on a letter in which was a redeemed note. It is clear that if the countess also went to the old money-lender, it was a case of emergency, which proves, my dear sir, that while your countess was laughing and dancing and coquetting last night, she was inwardly shaking in her shoes all the time at the thought of that bill which was due to-day."

"You make me wild to know the truth," cried Eugene. "I shall go to Madame Restaud's to-morrow."

"Yes," said Poiret, "it will be best to go to-morrow to Madame Restaud's."

"Perhaps, you will find our good Goriot there," remarked Vautrin, maliciously.

"What a slough this Paris of yours is," said Eugene, in disgust.

"And a very queer slough, too," returned Vautrin. "Those who go through it in a carriage are honest people, while those who wade through it on foot are knaves. Have the misfortune to take some little thing which does not belong to you, and you are shown up as a monster; but steal a million, and you are looked upon as a model of virtue. And you pay thirty millions to the police and the Government to maintain this state of morality. Delightful, truly!"

"What!" cried Madame Vauquer, suddenly; "has Pere Goriot melted up his silver-gilt breakfast-set?"

"Did it have two turtle-doves on the cover?" asked Eugene.

"That is the very one!"

"He valued it very highly; he fairly wept when he had finished kneading the bowl and the plate. I happened to see him," said Eugene.

"He valued it as he did his life," affirmed the widow.

"Then you see what an influence this woman had over him," said Vautrin. "She could wheedle his very soul out of him."

With these words the party separated; the student went up to his own room; and

Vautrin left the house. After a few minutes Madame Couture and Victorine came down and got into a fiacre, which Sylvia had called for them, and Monsieur Poiret offered his arm to Mademoiselle Michonneau for a walk in the Jardin des Plantes, while the sun was warm in the middle of the day.

Sylvia followed them with her eyes.

"There they go, arm in arm like married people," she said. "They are both so dry that if they were rubbed together, sparks would fly."

"If that should happen, look out for Mademoiselle Michonneau's shawl," said Madame Vauquer, laughing; "it would catch like German tinder."

At four o'clock in the afternoon, when Goriot re-entered the house, he saw, by by the light of two smoky lamps, that Victorine's eyes were red and swollen. Madame Vauquer was just listening to the account of the fruitless visit which had been paid to Monsieur Taillefer that morning, in which, wearied with the importunities of his daughter and her old friend, he had at last admitted them to an interview, in order to have an explanation with them.

"My dear," said Madame Couture to Madame Vauquer, "just think! he did not even ask Victorine to sit down all the time we were there. As for me, he coolly told me that I need not trouble myself to come there again; and that Victorine was only working against her own interests by importuning him so often (the monster! when the poor child only goes once a year!); that, as her mother had been penniless when he married her, Victorine had not the slightest right to complain; and, in short, he talked in such a hard, cruel way, that Victorine sobbed aloud. And then the poor child threw herself at his feet and begged and implored him to do justice to her mother's memory by reading her last words; and she tremblingly gave him the letter. He took it from her and tossed it into the fire, saying: 'Very well;' and then he held out his hand to help her to rise; but when she attempted to kiss it, he drew it away from her again. He is an old villain!" said the indignant lady, her wrath at boiling-point. "And his son is as bad as he is," she added. "The great blockhead came into the room and did not even speak to his sister."

"They are a pair of monsters!" said Pere Goriot, suddenly.

But Madame Couture, having caught her breath, went on, without paying any attention to this exclamation:

"And then," she said, "father and son both left the room, excusing themselves to me, as they had urgent business. And that is all our visit amounted to. But at least," triumphantly, "he has seen his daughter."

The rest of the boarders now began to drop in one after the other, and to fall into that species of small-talk in which certain classes of Parisians are wont to indulge, where an immense quantity of chaff has to be winnowed in order to get at a single grain of wheat.

"Well, Monsieur Poiret," said one of the outside boarders, who was employed at the Museum, "and how is your health?" Then without waiting for a reply: "Ladies, you seem to be unhappy," he said, addressing Madame Couture and Victorine.

"Are we going to have any dinner?" cried Horace Bianchon, a medical student and a friend of Rastignac.

"Here!" said Vautrin. "Move a little, will you, Pere Goriot. Your feet are taking up all the stove."

"Yes, that's a fact," said the Museum clerk. "My feet are cold, too."

"Here is His Excellency the Marquis de Rastignac, Doctor of Laws," cried Bianchon, seizing Eugene's throat and squeezing it until his victim was nearly stifled.

"Ah!" said Poiret, as Christopher entered. "Here is the dinner at last."

"That is cabbage soup," remarked Madame Vauquer, with pardonable pride in the steaming tureen.

"Did any one notice the fog this morning?" asked the Museum employé, as they took their places at the table.

"It was," said Bianchon, "a dense and unparalleled fog, a lugubrious fog, a mel-

ancholy fog, an experienced and broken-winded fog—in short, a fog which strongly resembled Pere Goriot."

Everybody's attention being thus attracted to the old man, he was caught in the act of smelling of a piece of bread which he held in his napkin, and which he was examining after his old commercial fashion.

"Well!" cried Madame Vauquer sharply, in a voice which drowned the noise of spoons, plates, and voices, "isn't the bread good enough for you?"

"On the contrary, madame," he replied, "it is made of Etampes flour, best quality."

"How do you know that?" asked Eugene of him.

"By the whiteness and the taste," he answered.

"Do you taste it with your nose?" asked Madame Vauquer, ironically, and a series of would-be jests and witty remarks followed, at the poor old man's expense.

He looked about him with a bewildered air, like one who hears a strange language.

"What are they saying?" he asked helplessly of Vautrin, who sat near him.

"Never you mind, old boy," returned the other facetiously, catching up Pere Goriot's hat, tossing it on his head, and giving it a thump which sent it completely down over his eyes.

The old man, half stupefied by this sudden attack, sat perfectly motionless for a moment, and before he had recovered himself, Christopher had taken away his plate, supposing that he had finished with his soup, so that when Pere Goriot, after raising his hat, felt for his spoon, his hand struck only the bare table.

Everybody burst out laughing.

"Sir," said the old man, "you are a sorry jester, and if you treat me in that manner again—"

"Well, what then?" asked Vautrin, interrupting him.

"Well, you will pay dearly for it one of these days," replied the other.

"Come, mademoiselle," said Vautrin, turning contemptuously from Pere Goriot, and addressing the sad-faced young girl, "you are eating nothing. Was your father as obdurate as ever?"

"He was a horrible old thing," returned Madame Couture, her indignation reviving.

"We must bring him to reason," said Vautrin.

"Look," said Eugene in a low tone to Bianchon, who sat near him; "just see how Pere Goriot is gazing at Mademoiselle Victorine."

In truth, the old man had forgotten to eat while looking at the mournful face of the young girl.

"Do you know," resumed Eugene, still in the same low voice, "I am beginning to think that we have all been mistaken in Pere Goriot; he is neither a fool nor a weak man. Last night I saw him twist a silver plate as if it had been wax, and at this moment his face is betraying strong emotions. His life appears to me to be mysterious enough to reward study. Yes, Bianchon, you may laugh if you like, but I am not joking."

"Very well," said Bianchon, "we will look upon him in the light of a medical specimen; shall I dissect him?"

"No," replied Eugene. "Examine his head instead."

"I don't know about that," returned the other; "his stupidity might be contagious."

V.

RASTIGNAC dressed himself in his best style the next day, and went, at three o'clock in the afternoon, to call on Madame de Restaud. On the way he indulged in those foolish dreams which make the lives of young men so full of emotions; they neither calculate upon obstacles nor dangers; they see before them only success, and rely implicitly upon projects which exist only in their own desires.

Eugene walked very carefully in order to avoid muddying his boots; as he went he was thinking of what he would say to Madame de Restaud, inventing an imagi-

nary conversation, and meditating witty remarks and repartees worthy of Talleyrand himself.

But in spite of all his care he got himself muddy, and had to go into the Palais Royal to have his boots blacked and his pantaloons brushed.

"If I were only rich," he thought, as he took the change for a hundred-sou piece, "I might go in a carriage, and then I could think at my ease."

Finally, however, he arrived at the Rue du Helder, and asked for the Comtesse de Restaud. With the coolness of a man who is sure of making his mark in the world some day, he met the scornful glance of the servants, who had seen him approach on foot. But these glances and the sight of a carriage standing in the courtyard made him nevertheless feel his own inferiority. The vehicle before the house was one of those luxurious cabriolets, with a richly caparisoned horse attached, which denote a lavish existence, and imply an acquaintance with all Parisian pleasures.

At sight of it, he grew suddenly out of humor. He realized all at once that the corners of his brain, which he had counted upon as being full of bright and witty remarks, were entirely empty, and that he had become intensely stupid. While awaiting the answer of the countess, to whom the servant had taken his name, he stood on one foot before a window in the antechamber, leaning his elbow on the sill, and longing, yet disdaining, to run away.

"Sir," said the valet, returning after a brief absence, "madame is in her boudoir, and very much engaged; but if you care to wait in the drawing-room—there is some one there already."

Rastignac, bent upon showing these people that he was at home in the house, coolly approached the door through which the valet had just entered, but stopped in astonishment on seeing that it opened upon a small room containing lamps, tables, and washing apparatus, and that it led only to a narrow corridor and a private staircase.

He stopped in confusion as he heard stifled laughter in the anteroom.

"This is the way to the drawing-room, sir," said the valet, with an exaggerated respect, which seemed like mockery.

Eugene turned upon his heel so hastily that he hit against a bath-tub, but happily retained sufficient presence of mind not to fall bodily into the bath. Just then a door opened at the end of the long corridor, which was lighted only by a single lamp, and Rastignac heard the voices of Madame Restaud and Pere Goriot, and then the sound of a kiss.

He re-entered the dining-room, crossed it, followed the servant, and entered another room where he stopped before a window on perceiving that it looked out upon the courtyard. He wanted to see if it was really Pere Goriot. His heart beat strangely, and Vautrin's insinuations recurred involuntarily to his mind.

While the servant waited for Eugene at the drawing-room door, an elegantly dressed young man came out of the room, and said, impatiently:

"I am going now, Maurice. You can say to Madame la Comtesse that I have been waiting for her more than half an hour."

He spoke impertinently, like one who feels that he has the right, and as he approached the window where Eugene was standing, more as if he cared to examine the person of the young student than the view out-of-doors, he hummed an air carelessly.

"If monsieur will wait a moment longer, madame will be disengaged," said Maurice, retreating to the anteroom.

At the same moment Pere Goriot left the house by a private door, near the large entrance. He was in the act of raising his umbrella, and did not notice that a tilbury driven by a young man was just entering the courtyard; he had barely time to jump back in order to escape being crushed; for the umbrella had frightened the horse, which shied just as the carriage reached the door-step.

The young man glanced angrily at Pere Goriot, and then bowed slightly, as one would salute a usurer of whom one has need, or a man whom one has wronged, but who exacts a certain unwilling respect.

Pere Goriot responded with a friendly little bow, full of good humor. The whole thing had passed with the rapidity of lightning. Eugene, too much absorbed in the scene to perceive that he was not alone, suddenly heard the voice of the countess.

"Ah! Maxime, were you going away?" she said, in a reproachful tone in which could be detected a little anger.

The countess had paid no attention to the arrival of the tilbury. Rastignac turned quickly. She was coquettishly dressed in a morning-robe of white cashmere, with knots of rose-colored ribbon here and there upon it. Her hair was carelessly knotted up, as is the custom of Parisian ladies in the morning, and her feet were clad in dainty slippers. She was delicately perfumed, and had probably recently come from her bath; her beauty was more voluptuous than ever, and Eugene felt its influence in the inmost fibers of his being.

As Maxime bent to kiss her hand, Eugene saw him for the first time, and at the same moment the countess perceived Eugene.

"Ah! it is you, Monsieur de Rastignac. I am very glad to see you," she said, with a manner which was difficult to interpret.

Maxime looked at Eugene, and then at the countess with a glance which seemed to say:

"I wish you would turn this fellow out-of-doors!"

Rastignac suddenly felt a violent aversion for the young man; at whom the countess was glancing with that submissive look which betrays a woman's secrets in spite of herself. In the first place, Maxime's beautifully curled blonde locks made him feel that his own hair suffered by the contrast. Then, Maxime's boots were in perfectly good condition, while his own, in spite of the care which he had taken on the way, were just a little soiled with mud; and, finally, Maxime wore a surtout which fitted his figure perfectly, and made it resemble that of a pretty woman, while Eugene, at half-past two in the afternoon, had on a black coat. The student keenly felt the superiority which the dandy, slender and tall, with clear eyes and pale complexion, possessed over him in appearance and attire.

The countess, without waiting for Eugene's reply, turned with a sudden motion and went quickly into the next room, the skirts of her morning-robe floating back and fluttering around her like a butterfly's wings.

Maxime followed her, and Eugene, furious, imitated his example. The three stood there together, before the high chimney-piece, in the middle of the great drawing-room. The student knew perfectly well that he was annoying Maxime, but even at the risk of displeasing the countess, this was exactly what he wished to do. He had suddenly recognized a rival, and he determined to triumph over him, come what might. He did not stop to consider that the other would perhaps allow himself to be insulted, for the sake of sending his adversary a challenge, and that Count Maxime de Trailles rarely missed a shot. Eugene himself was an expert marksman, but he had never made twenty hits out of twenty-two in a shooting-gallery.

The young count threw himself into an easy-chair beside the chimney, took up the tongs and poked the fire with so much unnecessary violence that the fair face of the countess darkened with vexation. She turned toward Eugene with a cold, questioning look which said unmistakably: "Why don't you go away?"

Eugene called up an amiable smile, and said:

"Madame, I hastened to wait upon you for the purpose—"

He was suddenly interrupted; the door opened, and the gentleman who had driven the tilbury appeared, without his hat, with not even a nod for the countess; he looked attentively at Eugene, and, extending a hand to Maxime, said: "How are you?" with a friendliness which rather surprised Rastignac's unsophisticated ideas.

"Monsieur de Restaud," said the countess to the student, indicating her husband by a gesture.

Eugene made a low bow.

"This gentleman," she continued, presenting Eugene to the Count de Restaud, "is Monsieur de Rastignac, who is a relative of Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauseant, on the side of the Marcillacs. I had the pleasure of meeting him at her last ball."

"A relative of Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauseant, on the side of the Marcillacs!" These words, which the countess pronounced rather emphatically, from the pride which a hostess takes in the fact that none save persons of distinction are ever admitted to her house, produced a magical effect. The count's coldly ceremonious manner suddenly changed, and bowing to the young student, he said:

"Enchanted, sir, to make your acquaintance."

Count Maxime de Trailles glanced uneasily at Eugene, and all at once lost his impertinent manner.

This stroke of a wand, this mention of a magic name, suddenly showed Eugene that some of the brilliancy which he had stowed away in the corners of his brain, ready for use, yet remained there in available shape, and he recovered his self-possession. A brief glimpse had been given him into the mysteries of the highest Parisian society.

"I had thought that the Marcillacs were all gone," said the Count de Restaud.

"My great-uncle, the Chevalier de Rastignac," replied Eugene, "married the heiress of the house of Marcillac. He had only one daughter, who married the Marshal de Clarimbault, maternal ancestor of Madame de Beauseant. Ours is the younger branch, a branch which is all the poorer from the fact that my great-uncle, a vice-admiral, lost everything in the king's service; and the revolutionary Government has never seen fit to admit our claims to a recompense."

"Did not your great-uncle command the *Vengeur* before 1789?"

"Exactly."

"Then he knew my grandfather, who commanded the *Warwick*."

Maxime lightly shrugged his shoulders with a look at the countess which plainly said:

"If they get to talking on that subject it is all up with us."

She understood his glance immediately, and with the quick tact which women possess, she said, smilingly:

"Come with me, Maxime; I have something to ask you. Gentlemen, we will leave you to navigate the *Warwick* and the *Vengeur*."

She rose, and made a sign to Maxime to follow her to her boudoir; but the two had scarcely reached the door, when the count interrupted his conversation with Eugene to call after them.

"Anastasie," he cried, in a tone of vexation, "do not go away. You know that—"

"I am coming back, I am coming back immediately," she said, interrupting him. "I must go for a moment to tell Maxime something."

She returned almost at once, for, knowing exactly how far she might go without offending her husband, she had recognized a certain tone in the count's voice which had warned her that it would be safer for her not to remain too long away.

All these *contretemps* were due to Eugene, and the countess cast a look of hearty dislike at him, as Maxime briefly said, addressing the assembled company:

"I see that you are busy, and I will not disturb you; adieu." After which he quickly made his escape.

"Stay, Maxime," cried the count.

"Come back again to dinner," said the countess, once more leaving Eugene and the count, and following Maxime into the smaller room, where they conversed for a long time together, hoping that Monsieur de Restaud would in the meantime dismiss Eugene.

Rastignac heard them laughing and talking, but maliciously kept up his conversation with Monsieur de Restaud, asking him questions or entering upon discussions, with the intention of seeing the countess once more, and of ascertaining, if possible, her relations with Pere Goriot. For she was a mystery to him—one which he had determined to try to fathom.

After awhile the count called to his wife again, authoritatively.

"It is of no use, Maxime," she said, regretfully; "we must give it up. This evening, then—"

"I hope," said her companion, bending over her and speaking in her ear, "that you will give that young fellow his dismissal. I don't like the way in which he looked at you, and if you don't take care, he will be saying things to you which will force me to send him a challenge."

"Are you crazy, Maxime?" she exclaimed. "On the contrary, these little students make excellent lightning-conductors."

He went out, laughing, followed by the countess, who stationed herself at the window to see him enter his carriage. She did not return to the drawing-room until he had driven out of the great gate.

"Look here, my dear," the count exclaimed as she entered, "this gentleman's family live not far from Verteuil, on the Charente, and his great-uncle and my grandfather were old friends."

"Enchanted to have any points of connection with this gentleman," she said, absent-mindedly.

"There are more of them than you think," said Eugene, in a low voice.

"What do you mean?" she returned, quickly.

"I mean," replied he, "that I have just seen going out of your house a man who is next-door neighbor to me in my boarding-house—Pere Goriot."

At this name, the count, who was poking the fire, dropped the tongs suddenly, as if they had burned his hands, and stood upright.

"Sir, you should have said Monsieur Goriot," he exclaimed, sharply.

The countess paled as she saw her husband's displeasure, and then blushed in evident embarrassment, replying, in a voice which she vainly strove to render natural and unconcerned:

"It is impossible to know any one of whom we are more fond."

Then, interrupting herself, and looking toward her piano as if a sudden idea had struck her, she asked:

"Are you fond of music?"

"Very," replied Eugene, who had grown red and awkward again, under the impression that he must have been guilty of some gross piece of stupidity.

"Do you sing?" she asked, going to the piano, and rapidly running her fingers over the keys.

"No," he replied, simply.

The Count de Restaud began walking up and down the room.

"That is a pity," returned the countess, carelessly. "You are deprived of a great source of pleasure;" and she sung lightly:

"Ca-a-ro, ca-a-a-ro, ca-a-a-a-ro, non du-bi-ta-re."

In pronouncing the name of Pere Goriot, Eugene had produced another magical effect, but one exactly the reverse of that which had thrilled the company at the words, "Relative of Madame de Beauseant." He found himself in the situation of a man who, introduced by favor into a sculptor's studio, accidentally knocks the heads off of one or two delicate statues. He longed to sink through the floor. Madame de Restaud's face had become hard and cold, and her indifferent glances avoided those of the young student.

"Madame," he said at last, desperately, "if you will permit me, I will now respectfully take my leave—"

"Whenever you like to come here," she said, quickly, interrupting him, "both Monsieur de Restaud and I will be delighted to see you."

Eugene bowed profoundly, and left the room, followed by Monsieur de Restaud, who, in spite of his remonstrances, accompanied him as far as the reception-room.

When Eugene had gone, the count remarked briefly to Maurice:

"If that gentleman calls again, neither the countess nor I will be at home to him."

As Eugene stepped out of doors, he perceived that it was raining.

"I have just done something frightfully stupid," he thought, "although I don't know what it is, and now I am going to spoil my hat and coat into the bargain. I ought to stay in a corner, and dig away at my law books, with no idea

of becoming anything better than a mere magistrate. How in the world can I expect to be able to go into society, when, to make a suitable appearance, it is absolutely necessary to have carriages, well-blacked boots, gold chains, all sorts of fixings, deer-skin gloves, at six francs a pair, in the morning, and yellow kids every evening? No, you old knave of a Pere Goriot, you can go your way, for all me!"

When he reached the street, the driver of a livery-stable carriage, who was evidently on his way home, after having driven a wedding-party, and who was willing to make an extra penny on his own account, motioned to Eugene questioningly, on seeing him standing there, without an umbrella, and dressed in a black coat, white waistcoat, yellow gloves, and shining boots. Eugene was in a desperate mood in which he was willing to plunge still further into the abyss, in the hope of some lucky extrication; so he made an affirmative sign to the driver, aud entered the carriage, where some orange-blossom petals and a few bits of ribbon bore witness to the recent presence of the bridal-party.

"Where to?" asked the coachman, who had taken off his white gloves.

"By Jove!" thought Eugene, "since I am in for it, I may as well have the good of it." Then he added, aloud: "Go to the Hotel de Beauseant."

"Which one?" asked the man.

Now this reply was decidedly disconcerting to Eugene, for he did not even know that there were two Hotels de Beauseant.

"I want to go to the Viscount de Beauseant's," he said, "on the Rue—"

"—de Grenelle," said the man, nodding his head, and interrupting him. "You see, there are the Count and the Marquis de Beauseant, in the Rue Saint Dominique," he added, shutting the door.

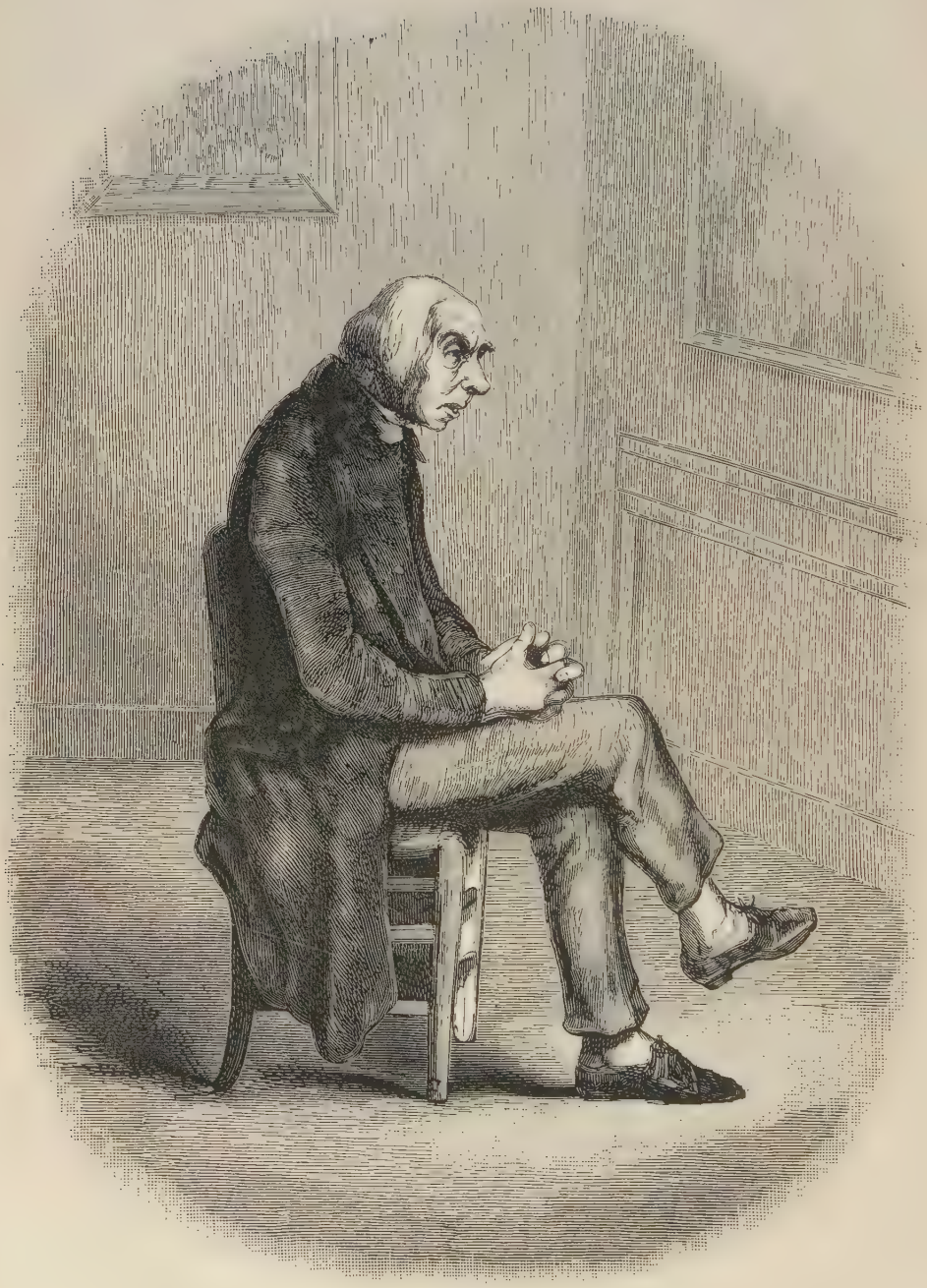
"I know it," said Eugene, coolly. Then, throwing his hat on the opposite seat, he thought angrily:

"Everybody is mocking me to-day. And now here is this performance, which will cost a small fortune. But at all events, I shall pay my respects to my cousin in an aristocratic manner. Pere Goriot has already cost me at least ten francs, the old rascal! Upon my word, I will relate my adventure to Madame de Beauseant; it may amuse her. She probably knows all about the relations between the beautiful countess and that wicked old man, and it is much better worth my while to please my cousin than to hang about this countess. For if the very name of the beautiful viscountess is so powerful, what must her personal influence be? If I want a patroness I had better aim for the highest at once!"

These thoughts and many others floated through his brain as the carriage rolled along. He took a sort of satisfaction in seeing the rain fall, for he said to himself that even if he was wasting two pieces of the little money which remained to him, he was at least saving his coat, hat, and boots thereby. And he even exulted with a secret pride as the driver called out: "Open the gate, please!"

A servant in red and gold livery turned the great gate on its hinges, and Rastignac contentedly saw his carriage pass under the gateway, turn in the courtyard and stop under the canopy by the door-steps.

The driver, in his great blue red-bordered driving-coat, dismounted to open the door, and as Eugene stepped from the carriage he heard stifled laughter from the servants, who were already making fun of the common-looking equipage. The young student was enlightened as to the cause of their laughter, when he compared his own vehicle with one which already stood in the courtyard—one of the most elegant coupés in Paris—to which were harnessed two mettlesome horses with rosettes at their ears. They were champing their bits as they stood pawing the ground, and their bridles were held by a powdered and liveried coachman. At the Chaussee d'Antin he had seen the cabriolet of the young man of twenty-six; here, he found the luxury of a great lord, an equipage which could not have been purchased for thirty thousand francs.



PERE GORIOT.

"In some he awakened horror; in others pity."

"Who is this, I wonder?" said Eugene to himself, beginning gradually to understand that it was rather difficult to find great ladies at leisure in Paris. "I suppose my cousin has another Maxime with her!"

He went up the steps with his heart in his mouth. At his appearance the glass door opened, and the valets were suddenly as sober as so many well-trained animals. The ball at which he had been present had been given in the grand reception-rooms on the ground-floor. Not having had the time, between the invitation and the ball, to pay his respects to his cousin, he had never yet penetrated to her private apartments, and he was now for the first time to see the marvels of personal elegance which surrounded the distinguished lady. The study was all the more interesting since he was now in a position to compare the details with those of Madame de Restaud's drawing-rooms.

At half past four the vicomtesse was visible: five minutes before that time she would not have received her cousin; and Eugene, who knew nothing of Parisian etiquette, or of Madame de Beauseant's private history, so familiar in all the drawing-rooms of Paris, was conducted up a wide flower-filled staircase, white with a gilded balustrade and a red carpet, to the apartments of his distinguished relative.

VI.

For three years Madame de Beauseant had been associated with a rich Portuguese lord, the Marquis d'Adjuda Pinto, in a sort of Platonic attachment, recognized by her husband, and well known to all her friends, who accommodated themselves to the situation and never intruded at the Hotel Beauseant between the hours of two and four in the afternoon, so that, without positively closing her doors, the vicomtesse found herself practically mistress of the most complete solitude at that time.

In the first days of this friendship, those who came to see Madame de Beauseant between these hours were sure to find the Marquis d'Adjuda Pinto there; and the lady, although she could not turn unwelcome guests away, received them so coldly, and contemplated her ceiling so untiringly, that they soon realized what bores they were and reserved their visits for more auspicious hours.

At the time of which we are writing, Monsieur d'Adjuda had found it expedient to marry, and he was about to wed a young lady named De Rochefide; and, of all the great world, the only person still ignorant of this marriage was Madame de Beauseant. Some of her friends had dared to hint of it to her, but she had laughed incredulously, believing them to be jealous of her happiness.

But the marriage was now about to be consummated, and although he had come this day with the express purpose of enlightening the vicomtesse upon the subject, the noble Portuguese had not yet said a single word in regard to it. Many men require more courage to brave a woman's anger than to face an adversary in the open field and to measure swords with him for life or death; and at the very moment of Eugene's arrival the Marquis d'Adjuda Pinto was on thorns, and meditating his escape, saying to himself that he would write and tell the news, since that would be a much more comfortable way of conducting the business than by word of mouth.

When the servant announced Monsieur Eugene de Rastignac, the marquis could not repress a little movement of relief. A woman who is in love is a very suspicious creature, and this slight movement did not escape the notice of Madame de Beauseant.

Eugene had not learned that it is never safe to present one's self at a house in Paris without having first received from some friend a full and accurate history of the private lives of its inhabitants, in order to avoid unpleasant combinations. After having had the misfortune to plunge into an awkward situation at Madame de Restaud's, from which she had not even given him the opportunity to extricate himself, nobody save Eugene

would have been capable of getting himself into fresh trouble in the same way by presenting himself at the house of Madame de Beauseant. But if he had been dreadfully in the way of Madame de Restaud and Monsieur de Trailles, he was, at least, the means of rescuing the Marquis d'Adjuda from an embarrassing position.

"Adieu," said the Portuguese, hastening to the door as Eugene entered the coquettish little room, all gray and rose-color, and full of luxury and elegance.

"But only until this evening," said Madame de Beauseant, turning her head and throwing a glance at the marquis. "Are we not going to the opera?"

"I cannot," he said, his hand on the door-knob as he spoke.

Madame de Beauseant rose and called him back to her without paying the slightest attention to Eugene, who stood bewildered by a marvelous richness of luxury which reminded him of the "Arabian Nights," and who did not know what to do with himself in the presence of a lady who had not even noticed him.

The vicomtesse raised a finger of her right hand, and with a pretty movement beckoned the marquis to her side. There was in the gesture such an autocratic, passionate demand that the marquis left the door-knob and returned to her.

Eugene looked at him, not without envy. "There is the owner of the coupé," he thought. "I suppose one must have mettlesome horses and gilded liveries in order to win a woman in Paris."

The demon of luxury seized upon him, the fever of gain burned in his veins, and the thirst of gold parched his throat. He had a hundred and thirty francs for his quarterly allowance; and the whole family at home, father, mother, brothers, sisters and aunt, spent not quite two hundred francs a month, all told. This rapid comparison between his present situation and the end at which he aimed almost stupefied him.

"Why," asked the vicomtesse, with a laugh, "can you not come to the opera?"

"Business: I am to dine at the house of the British embassador," he replied.

"You will leave them," she said, authoritatively.

When a man once begins to deceive he has to heap falsehood upon falsehood: so Monsieur d'Adjuda returned, laughingly:

"Do you insist?"

"Certainly I do," she said.

"I will if I possibly can," he replied, throwing one of those subtle glances at her, which would have convinced and reassured any other woman. And then he took her hand, kissed it, and went out.

Eugene passed his hand over his hair, and turned to bow, thinking that now Madame de Beauseant would have a little attention to bestow on him; but all at once she started forward, hastened to the gallery, and placed herself by a window where she could watch Monsieur d'Adjuda as he entered his carriage; she listened attentively to his order, and heard the footman repeat it to the coachman: "To Monsieur de Rochefide's."

These words, and the manner in which the marquis threw himself into his carriage, were like a thunder-bolt to the lady, who entered her sleeping-room, a prey to the most horrible apprehensions. She seated herself at her writing-table, and took a sheet of paper.

"If you dine at the Rochefides'," she wrote, "instead of with the English embassador, you will owe me an explanation; I shall expect you."

After retouching several words which the trembling of her hand had rendered almost illegible, she signed with the letter C., which meant Claire de Bourgogne, and rang.

"Jacques," she said to the servant who immediately answered the summons, "at half past seven you will go to Monsieur de Rochefide's, and you will ask for the Marquis d'Adjuda. If he is there, you will hand him this note without waiting for a reply; but if he is not there, you will come back again, and bring the note to me."

As the servant took the note, he said:

"Some one is waiting in the drawing-room, madame."

"Ah! true," she replied, pushing open the door.

Eugene was beginning to feel extreme-

ly embarrassed and ill at ease, when, at length, the countess appeared, saying, in a tone whose suppressed emotion stirred his very heart :

"I beg your pardon, sir ; I had a few words to write, but now I am entirely at your service."

She hardly knew what she was saying, for she was thinking as she spoke :

"Ah ! he is going to marry Mademoiselle de Rochefide. But can he ? That marriage will be broken off this evening, or I— But it will all be done with by to-morrow."

"Cousin," replied Eugene—

But she interrupted him quickly.

"What !" she said, with a look which nearly froze the young student.

Eugene had learned enough in the last two or three hours to make him on the alert, and he instantly comprehended the meaning of her exclamation.

"Madame," he corrected himself, blushing. Then, after hesitating a moment, he continued :

"Pardon me ; I am so much in need of protection that a little bit of relationship would have done me good."

Madame de Beauseant smiled, but sadly ; she felt already the clouds that were gathering about her happiness.

"If you knew the situation of my family," he continued, "you would delight to play the part of a fairy godmother, and smooth all obstacles from the path of your godson."

"Well ! cousin," she said, laughing, "how can I serve you ?"

"I cannot tell," he replied. "To belong to you by a bond of relationship which is almost lost in the shades of the past, is in itself a fortune. You have disconcerted me, and I cannot remember what it was that I came to say to you. You are the only person in Paris whom I know. Ah ! I want to ask you to accept me as one who only desires the shelter of your presence like a little child, and who would die for you."

"Would you kill some one for me ?" she demanded.

"I would kill more than one," affirmed Eugene.

"Child ! Yes, you are a child," she said, repressing her tears. "I think you would love sincerely !"

"Oh !" he exclaimed ; but words failed him to express his emotions.

The vicomtesse was much interested in the young student's ambitious words. For his part, he was learning rapidly. Between the blue boudoir of Madame de Restaud and the rose-colored drawing-room of Madame de Beauseant, he had taken at least a three years' course in that Parisian law which is unwritten, but which constitutes a high social jurisprudence, which, well learned and well practiced, leads to everything.

"Ah ! I remember what I was going to tell you," said Eugene. "I met Madame de Restaud at your ball, and I went to call upon her."

"You must have been very much in her way," said the other, smiling.

"Yes, I was," he returned frankly. "I am very ignorant, and I shall make enemies everywhere if you refuse me your help. It seems to be very difficult to meet in Paris with a young, beautiful, rich and elegant woman who is at leisure, and I need somebody to tell me about what you women understand so well—life. I shall find a Monsieur de Trailles everywhere. I have come to you for the solution of a riddle, and to entreat you to tell me the nature of the stupidity of which I have evidently been guilty. I mentioned a Pere—"

"Madame la Duchesse de Langeais," said Jacques, interrupting the young student, who made an angry gesture of impatience.

"Let me advise you in the first place," said the vicomtesse, in a low tone, "if you wish to succeed, to be a little less demonstrative."

"Ah ! how do you do, dear ?" she continued, rising and advancing to meet the duchess, whose hands she clasped with a caressing effusion which she might have shown toward a sister, and to which the duchess responded with sweetest words of affection.

"They are very good friends," thought Rastignac, "and I shall have two pro-

tectresses instead of one; for they must care for the same things; this one will be interested in me, also."

"To what happy thought do I owe the pleasure of seeing you, my dear Antoinette?" said Madame de Beauseant.

"I saw Monsieur d'Adjuda Pinto going into the Rochefides' house, so I knew you would be alone," replied the duchess, sweetly.

Madame de Beauseant neither blushed nor faltered in her look, and not a muscle of her face moved as the duchess pronounced these fatal words.

"If I had known that you were occupied—" she added, glancing toward Eugene.

"This is Monsieur Eugene de Rastignac, my cousin," said the vicomtesse. Then she continued: "Have you had news from General Montriveau? Serizy told me yesterday that they had not seen anything of him lately. Was he at your house to-day?"

The duchess, who was reported to be dead in love with Monsieur de Montriveau, and to have been forsaken by him, felt all the sting of this question, and blushed as she replied:

"He was at the Elysée yesterday."

"On duty," said Madame de Beauseant.

"Claire, you are doubtless aware," resumed the duchess, spite and malignity darting from her eyes, "that to-morrow the bans are to be published between Monsieur d'Adjuda Pinto and Mademoiselle de Rochefide?"

This blow struck home. The vicomtesse grew pale; then she replied, laughing:

"One of those reports with which silly people amuse themselves. Why should Monsieur d'Adjuda bestow upon the Rochefides one of the most ancient and honorable names of all Portugal? The Rochefides are only upstarts of yesterday."

"But they say that Bertha will have two hundred thousand francs a year," returned her friend.

"Monsieur d'Adjuda is too rich to need to resort to any such sordid motives," said Madame de Beauseant.

"But, my dear, Mademoiselle de Rochefide is charming."

"Ah!"

"At any rate, he is to dine there to-day, and the articles are all ready to be signed. I am very much surprised that you are ignorant of all this."

"What is this little piece of stupidity of which you were telling me you had been guilty?" asked the vicomtesse, suddenly turning to Eugene, and abruptly changing the subject. Then she added to the duchess:

"This gentleman has so recently come into our Parisian world, my dear Antoinette, that he probably does not understand a word of what we are saying. So, in mercy to him, let us defer the rest of this discussion until to-morrow. By that time, you know, everything will have been officially settled, and you can be sure of your news."

The duchess turned and surveyed Eugene from head to foot, with one of those disdainful looks which put the temperature of a man's complacency at zero-point.

"Madame," he said, "I have, without knowing it, plunged a dagger into the heart of Madame de Restaud. Unwittingly, that was my crime."

He had sufficient penetration to see that the affectionate phrases of these two ladies contained biting words, and he felt a desire to come to the rescue.

Madame de Beauseant cast upon him a glance in which gratitude and dignity were blended; the look came like a balm to heal the wound which the cool, depreciating stare of the duchess had inflicted upon him.

"You must understand," said Eugene, continuing, "that I had just succeeded in gaining the good will of the Count de Restaud; for," he added, turning to the duchess with an air at once humble and malicious, "I must tell you, madame, that I am as yet only a student, poor and alone—"

"Do not say that, Monsieur de Rastignac," she replied; "for you know that women never value people who do not value themselves."

"Ah! well," said Eugene, "I am only twenty-two years old, and one must put up with the misfortune of being youthful.

Besides, I am at confessional now, and it would be impossible to imagine a prettier or more agreeable one."

Then, perceiving that the duchess evidently thought this remark in bad taste, he hastened to resume his story:

"I got along pretty well with the husband, and was even tolerated by the countess, although I had stupidly come between her and Monsieur de Trailles, when I took it into my head to tell them that I was acquainted with a man whom I had just seen going out of their house by a side door, and who had kissed the countess before leaving."

"Who was it?" asked both ladies at once.

"An old man, who lives in the Faubourg Saint Marceau, because he is poor, like me: a wretched being at whom everybody feels at perfect liberty to mock and jeer, and whom we call Pere Goriot."

"Oh! child that you are," exclaimed the vicomtesse. "Madame de Restaud's maiden name was Goriot."

"She was the daughter of a vermicelli-maker," added the duchess, "and made her *début* on the same day with the daughter of a pastry-cook. Don't you remember, Claire? The king burst out laughing, and made a *bon mot* in Latin upon the word farina. What was it, now?"

"*Ejusdem farinæ?*" ventured Eugene at a guess.

"That's it!" said the duchess.

"But is it possible that he is her father?" resumed the student, with a horrified gesture.

"Even so," returned the other; "the man has two daughters, to whom he is devotedly attached, although they have both practically repudiated him."

"Is not the second daughter," asked the vicomtesse of Madame de Langeais, "married to a banker with a German name, a Baron de Nucingen? Is not her name Delphine? And is she not a blonde, who makes herself very conspicuous in her box at the opera by her loud laughter?"

The duchess smiled as she answered:

"My dear, I do admire you! What makes you take so much notice of that sort of people? For my part, I cannot conceive how Monsieur de Restaud ever fell in love with Anastasie."

"They have repudiated their father," said Eugene.

"Well, yes," replied the vicomtesse; "a good father, too, who is reported to have given each of them five or six hundred thousand francs, in order to get them well and happily married, and who only kept for himself a modest income of eight or ten thousand francs, believing that his daughters would always remain his, and that he would henceforth have two homes, where he would always be gladly welcomed. But in two years' time he has been practically banished from both houses, as not fine enough—"

As she paused, great tears rose slowly to Eugene's eyes; for he was still in the freshness of early faith, and this was only his first day on the battlefield of Parisian civilization. Sincere emotion is contagious, and for a moment there was silence in the little room.

"Upon my word," said Madame de Langeais at length, "it does seem dreadful, and yet the same thing happens every day. And why? Tell me, my dear, have you ever considered what sort of a being a son-in-law is? He is a man for whom we bring up a dear little creature, to whom we are attached by a thousand bonds, who will be for sixteen years the joy of her family, its white soul, as Lamartine expresses it. Well, when this man takes her from us, he immediately sets about uprooting every sentiment by which she is attached to her family; and what is the result? Yesterday our daughter was all our own, and we were hers. To-day she has made herself our enemy. Do we not see the same tradegy constantly enacted? Here, the daughter-in-law is at sword's-point with her father-in-law, who has sacrificed everything for his son; there, a son-in-law turns his mother-in-law out-of-doors. I hear people lament that there is nothing dramatic about our society nowadays, but it seems to me that the drama of the son-in-law is

truly frightful. I remember very well how it came about, with regard to the old vermicelli-maker. I believe that this Foriot—"

"Goriot, madame."

"Oh, yes, Moriot! That this Moriot, then, was president of his division during the Revolution. He was in a position to know all about the scarcity of provisions, and he laid the foundation of his fortune, then, by selling farina at ten times the price it cost him. He had as much as he wanted of it, for my grandmother's steward sold it to him for enormous sums. This Goriot shared his good fortune, no doubt, as everybody did then, with the Committee of Public Safety; for I remember hearing the steward tell my grandmother that she might feel perfectly secure in her home at Grandvilliers, because her wheat was an excellent passport.

"Well, this Loriot, who supplied the cutters-off of heads with wheat, had only one passion, and that was, adoration of his daughters. He succeeded in placing one in the Restaud mansion, and in bestowing the other upon the Baron de Nucingen, a rich Royalist banker. You can easily see why, under the Empire, the two sons-in-law did not find much fault at receiving the man who had taken such a part in the proceedings of '93. It might help them on with Napoleon. But as soon as the Bourbons returned, the old man was very much in their way. The daughters, who, perhaps, had some natural affection for their father, tried to keep things smooth; and to please both parties, they would receive Goriot when no one else was expected, and we can imagine the honeyed phrases by which they tried to impose upon him, saying that they would have so much the better time, since they were to be alone, and so on.

"For my part, my dear, I believe that everybody who can love has eyes and feelings; and you may depend upon it that the old man's heart bled at this treatment. He saw that his daughters were ashamed of him, and that he was unwelcome to his sons-in-law; there was nothing to be done but to sacrifice himself; and, since he was a father, he did it; he banished himself from their homes, and when he saw that his daughters were pleased he was satisfied. Father and children were confederates in this little crime. We often see the same thing. Was not Pere Doriot a stain upon his daughters' drawing-rooms? Very well, if he annoyed them, he must go; there was nothing else to be done.

"That which happened to this poor old father is what happens so often to a pretty woman with the man whom she loves best: if she weary him with too much love, he will escape from her, no matter at what cost. It is never advisable to pour out all our affection too lavishly at once; our heart is a treasure-house; empty it at one stroke, and we are ruined. This is what this poor old father had done. He had given, for twenty years, his life and his love, and he had given his fortune in one day; and when they had squeezed the lemon dry, his daughters threw the worthless peel out into the streets to be swept away."

"The world is infamous," said the vicomtesse, toying with the fringe of her shawl, and never raising her eyes; for she had been deeply touched by those words of the countess which applied to her own story.

"Infamous! no," returned the duchess. "It goes its own way; that is all. If I speak of it as I do it is only to show that I am not its dupe. I think as you do," she continued, pressing her friend's hand; "the world is a slough; let us endeavor to keep on the heights above the mire."

She rose, and kissing Madame de Beauseant on the forehead, said:

"You are very beautiful just now, dear; you have as pretty a color as I ever saw." Then, with a slight bow in the direction of the young man, she took her leave.

VII.

"Pere Goriot is sublime!" exclaimed Eugene, thinking of the silver-gilt breakfast-service.

Madame de Beauseant did not hear him, for she was lost in thought. Some minutes passed in perfect silence, and the embarrassed young student knew not whether to go or stay; he dared not utter a word.

"This is a wicked and infamous world," said the countess finally, breaking the long silence, and speaking involuntarily, as if to herself. "As soon as any evil comes to us, there is always a friend ready to tell us of it, and to expect us to admire the handle of the dagger which is plunged into our heart. Already sarcasm and raillery! But I can defend myself."

She lifted her head like the haughty lady that she was, and her proud eyes flashed. Then, seeing Eugene, she said:

"Ah! you are still there!"

"Still here," he repeated piteously.

"Ah, well, Monsieur de Rastignac," she returned, "let me advise you to treat this world as it deserves. You desire success, and I will tell you how to gain it; learn to sound the depth of feminine corruption, and to measure the length of man's miserable vanity. Although I am deeply read in the book of the world, I find that there were some pages of which even I was totally ignorant; now I know it all. The more coldly you make your calculations, the better off you will be. Strike without pity, if you wish to be feared. If you use men and women only as you would use the post-horses on a journey, changing them for fresh ones whenever they flag, you will reach your goal at last. You will never succeed here, unless you can arouse some woman's interest in you; and she must be young, rich, and attractive. But if you have a true sentiment, conceal it as you would a treasure; never let it be suspected, or you are lost; in which case you will be no longer the executioner; you will be the victim. If you ever fall in love, guard your secret well; do not yield it up without a thorough knowledge of the heart to which you open your own; and in order to be in a position beforehand to guard this possible love which may come to you, learn to distrust everybody.

"Now listen, Miguel," she continued, earnestly, unconsciously calling him by a name that was not his; "there is something yet more terrible than the abandonment of a father by his daughters, who wish him dead; and that is, rivalry between two sisters. Monsieur de Restaud is well born, and for his sake his wife has been well received and presented at court; but her sister, her rich sister, the beautiful Madame Delphine de Nucingen, the wife of a wealthy man, is ready to die of envy; she is simply devoured by jealousy, for she is at least a hundred leagues behind her sister in the social race. In fact, her sister is no longer a sister to her; they repudiate each other, even as they have both united in denying their father.

"I believe Madame de Nucingen would be willing to wipe up all the mud between the Rue St. Lazarus and the Rue de Grenelle for the privilege of entering my drawing-rooms. She thought De Marsay would help her to attain this coveted end, and she accordingly devoted herself to him, but without success; De Marsay cares nothing for her. Now, if you were to present her to me, she would be everlastingly grateful to you. Love her if you like, but at all events make use of her. I will receive her once or twice, when there are a great many here; but I will never receive her familiarly of a morning. However, if I receive her at all, that will be sufficient for her and for you.

"You have shut the doors of the countess upon you by the pronunciation of the name of Pere Goriot. Yes, it is a fact, I assure you! You might go twenty times to her house, and each time you would be told that madame was not at home. Well! let Pere Goriot introduce you to Madame Delphine de Nucingen. She will be to you like a flag of battle; if you are the man whom she chooses to distinguish, other women will go wild over you. Her rivals, her friends, even her very best friends, will try to take you away from her; for there are women who love a man simply because he has been chosen by another, just as there are common people who

think that, by copying our hats, they will succeed in copying our manners also.

"You will then be successful, and in Paris success is everything—it is the key to power. If women think you witty and talented, men will be of the same opinion, unless you undeceive them. You can then do anything you like, for you will have a footing everywhere; and you will know the world for what it is—a collection of knaves and dupes. As for your part, see that you belong to neither class. I give you my name as a clew out of the labyrinth; see that you return it to me untarnished," she added, lifting her proud head and looking at him with the air of a queen.

"Now go," she resumed, gently. "We women have our battles to fight as well as you."

"If you ever need a willing champion to do battle for you—" said Eugene; and then paused.

"Well?" she returned.

He put his hand on his heart, smiled in answer to her smile, and was gone.

Eugene was hungry, and fearful lest he should be late to dinner; therefore he enjoyed yet the more the luxury of being carried rapidly through Paris. The absence of all effort left his thoughts free, and he gave himself up to reverie.

When a young man of his age first feels the touch of scorn, he is deeply and angrily resentful, shaking his fist at all the world, and vowing vengeance right and left. Rastignac was now fairly overpowered by the words: "You have shut the countess's doors upon you."

"I will go there and see!" he said to himself, "and if Madame de Beauseant is right, if I am denied admittance—then! —Madame de Restaud will find me everywhere she goes. I will learn to use a sword and a pistol, and I will kill her Maxime for her!"

He was suddenly stopped in the mad career of his reflections by the thought of his poverty. He remembered all at once the luxury which he had seen at the house of the Countess de Restaud, and the grandeur and magnificence which surrounded Madame de Beauseant, and he realized that laws and morals are powerless before riches, and that fortune is the *ultima ratio mundi*.

"Vautrin is right; wealth is virtue," he said to himself.

When he reached the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, he ran up to his room in search of the ten francs to give to the coachman, and as he came down he caught sight of the eighteen boarders, assembled in the loathsome dining-room, like so many animals at feeding-time, just about to begin their dinner. The sight of the miserable people and the wretched room was horrible to him; the transition was too abrupt, the contrast too complete; ambition reared itself yet higher in his heart at the sight. On one side he saw fresh and charming images of the most elegant and refined types, young and beautiful faces surrounded by marvels of art and luxury, and passionate heads full of poetry; on the other, squalor, dirt and misery, wornout passions and sordid lives. The cynical instructions of Madame de Beauseant recurred to his mind, and misery made its own comments upon them. He resolved to open two trenches side by side, and to seek for fortune in both; to apply himself equally to science and to love; to be a learned doctor of laws, and a man of the world. He was still too much of a child to know that the two lines are parallels which never meet.

"You are very thoughtful, Monsieur le Marquis," said Vautrin, who had been bending upon him a look which seemed to worm itself into the inmost secrets of his heart.

"I am not disposed to endure the raillery of any one who addresses me as marquis," he replied, bitterly. "In this city, to be truly a marquis one ought to have a hundred thousand pounds a year; and a man who resides at the Maison Vauquer is not precisely one of Fortune's favorites."

Vautrin looked at Rastignac with a scornful and patronizing air, as much as to say, "You little puppet, whom I could crush with a finger!" Then he replied, "You are in a bad humor, possibly be-

cause your interview with the beautiful Comtesse de Restaud has not been as successful as you could wish."

"She has closed her doors upon me for having mentioned that her father eats at our table," cried Rastignac.

The boarders exchanged glances. Pere Goriot lowered his eyes, and turned his head to wipe away a tear.

"You have thrown some snuff into my eye," he said to his neighbor.

"I want it distinctly understood that henceforth any one who disturbs or annoys Pere Goriot makes an enemy of me," said Eugene, looking straight at the man who sat next to the old vermicelli-maker; "he is worth more than all of us put together; always excepting the ladies," he added, turning to Mademoiselle Taillefer as he spoke.

This remark was like a thunderbolt; and Eugene had spoken in such a tone that no one dared reply. Vautrin alone said sneeringly:

"If you are going to set yourself up as Pere Goriot's champion, you will have to learn to draw a sword and fire a pistol."

"I mean to," replied Eugene, coolly.

"So you have really entered upon a campaign to-day?" returned Vautrin, jeeringly.

"Perhaps," replied Rastignac. "But," he added meaningly, "I do not propose to answer for my actions, as long as I do not seek to pry into the nocturnal doings of others."

Vautrin looked askance at Rastignac. Then he said contemptuously:

"If one does not want to be the dupe of puppets at a show, one must go behind the scenes, and not peep through the holes in the curtain." Then seeing Eugene bristling to defend himself, he added hastily, "Enough said! We will resume the subject at some other time."

A dull, gloomy shadow had fallen over the meal. Pere Goriot, absorbed in the grief which the young student's words had caused him, did not notice that the attitude of his neighbors toward him had insensibly changed, and did not realize that a young man in a position to secure a cessation of persecution had undertaken his defense.

"And so," said Madame Vauquer, in a low voice, "Pere Goriot is actually the father of a comtesse?"

"And of a baroness," replied Rastignac.

"I have examined his head, as you told me to," said Bianchon confidentially to Eugene, "and I find there only one lump —that of paternity."

Eugene was in too serious a mood to laugh at the jest. He was meditating upon Madame de Beauseant's counsels, and wondering how and where he could procure the money to act upon them; and he remained silent and deep in thought, as one by one the company left the room.

"And have you really seen my daughter?" said Pere Goriot, then, in a voice full of emotion.

Awakened thus from his reverie, Eugene took the old man's hand, and looked at him almost tenderly.

"You are a brave and noble man," he said. "We will talk of your daughters later."

He rose without more words, and went up to his room, where he wrote the following letter to his mother:

"My dear Mother—I am in trouble about something, and come to you for help. I am in a position to speedily make my fortune; but to do it I must have twelve hundred francs. They are absolutely necessary to me, and I must have them without fail. Say nothing of this to my father, for he might oppose it; and I really must have the money, or I shall be in despair, and ready to blow my brains out. I will explain everything when I see you; but I should have to write volumes to make you understand just what my situation is. I have not been gambling, dear mother, and I have no debts; but if you value the happiness of the life which you brought into the world, find this sum for me.

"The fact is, I am going to the house of the Vicomtesse de Beauseant, who has been good enough to take me under her protection; and I cannot go into society without so much as a sou, even, toward

buying gloves, etc. I will eat and drink nothing but bread and water; I will even fast if necessary; but if I am to make my way at all, if I am not to remain in the mud forever, I must have money. I know all the hopes which you have founded upon me, and my greatest desire is to see them speedily realized. My good mother, I beg of you to sell some of your old jewels; I will replace them before long. I know enough of the situation of our family to appreciate the extent of the sacrifice which I am asking, and I entreat you to believe that I would not ask it needlessly. I would indeed be a monster if I were to do that. Look upon my prayer only as the cry of imperious necessity. Our future depends entirely upon this money which I ask of you, and with which I must open the campaign; for life in Paris is like a perpetual combat.

"If, to make up the sum, there is no other resource than to sell my aunt's laces, tell her that I will send her more beautiful ones still, before long."

He wrote to each of his sisters, asking them to send him whatever they could spare, and appealing to their feelings of honor and delicacy to refrain from mentioning to the other members of the family any help which they might be able to give him.

After he had written the letters, his conscience reproached him; he knew how earnestly his sisters would strive, and what sacrifices they would make to comply with his demand; he imagined the innocent deceptions which they would practice in order to send him the money secretly; and he was ashamed of himself for having written. He imagined also the efforts of his mother and sisters to make up the necessary sum, and their grief if the result should fall short of his wishes; and as he remembered that all this love and sacrifice was the ladder by which he hoped to reach Delphine de Nucingen, tears sprung to his eyes, and he paced the floor in agitation.

Pere Goriot saw him through the half-open door, and came across the passage, saying:

"What is the matter, sir?"

"Ah! my good neighbor," returned Eugene, "the matter is that I am a son and a brother, even as you are a father. You have reason to be anxious on behalf of the Comtesse Anastasie; she seems to be completely under the control of one Maxime de Trailles, and is in danger."

And Pere Goriot retired to his own room again, muttering some words which Eugene did not catch.

The next day Rastignac went to post his letters: even at the last moment he hesitated, but finally he dropped them into the box, saying:

"I shall succeed!"

The saying of the gambler; of the great leader; of the fatalist; a saying which ruins more men than it saves.

Several days later Eugene went to Madame de Restaud's, and was not received. Three times he went and three times was he denied admission, although he presented himself at an hour when the Comte Maxime de Trailles was not there. The vicomtesse was right.

As for his studies, he abandoned them entirely: he went and answered to his name, but that was all. He reasoned on the subject as so many students do: he made up his mind not to devote himself to his books until just before the time for the examinations; he would let everything go, until the end of the third year, and then apply himself seriously to his studies, and learn at one stroke all that he needed of law.

This plan would leave him fifteen months of leisure in which to navigate the unknown waters of the Parisian world, and to fish for fortune in their troubled depths.

During this week he saw Madame de Beauseant twice, going to her house only at an hour when the Marquis d'Adjuda was not there. For several days this remarkable woman, the most poetic figure in the Faubourg Saint Germain, had been victorious, arresting, by the sheer force of her will, the marriage between the marquis and Mademoiselle Rochefide. A few days more, however, would inevitably precipitate the catastrophe. The Marquis

d'Adjuda and the Rochefides looked upon the quarrel and reconciliation as rather a fortunate event than otherwise; they hoped that by means of it, Madame de Beauseant would gradually become accustomed to the idea of the contemplated marriage, and would end by yielding gracefully to destiny.

In spite, then, of the most solemn promises, each day renewed, the Marquis d'Adjuda Pinto continued to play his accustomed rôle, and the vicomtesse only too willingly allowed herself to be deceived. As the Duchesse de Langeais, her most intimate friend, remarked in disgust, "Instead of leaping nobly out of the window, she allowed herself to be ignominiously rolled down the staircase."

But these days wrested from Destiny answered the purpose of keeping the vicomtesse in Paris, where she could be of use to her young relative, to whom she had taken an almost superstitious fancy. Eugene had manifested devotion and sympathy for her at a time when a woman is least likely to find consolation and pity, and she gratefully remembered his words.

In order to have a perfect understanding of his field of battle, before entering upon the Nucingen campaign, Rastignac, by one means and another, collected a mass of information concerning the previous life of Pere Goriot, which may be briefly summed up thus:

Jean-Joachim Goriot was, before the Revolution, only a simple vermicelli workman, clever, economical, and sufficiently enterprising to buy out his master's stock, when that worthy fell a victim to the first uprising in 1789. He established himself in the Rue Jussienne, near the Halle aux Bles, and had the good sense to accept the presidency of his section, in order to secure the protection of the most influential persons during this dangerous epoch.

This wisdom laid the foundation for his fortune, which began to increase at the time of the dearth of provisions, when grain commanded an enormous price in Paris. During this year, the Citizen Goriot made so much money that henceforth he was able to carry on operations on that basis which the possession of a large capital commands. His insignificance and unimportance gave him that protection which mediocrity always enjoys, and besides, no one realized the extent of his fortune until the time came when it was no longer a crime to be rich.

The commerce of grain seemed to have absorbed all his intelligence. In a question of wheat, or flour, or small grains, of recognizing their qualities, of watching over their preservation, of prophesying the turn of the market and the abundance or scarcity of provisions, of procuring cereals at a good bargain and supplying himself from the most advantageous crops, Goriot had not his equal. To see him conducting his business, explaining the laws which govern the exportation and importation of grains, and carefully weighing chances and changes, a man would have judged him worthy of being Minister of State. Patient, active, energetic, untiring, rapid in his proceedings, and unerring in his judgment, he was a very diplomat to plan, and a soldier to execute. But take him away from his specialty, from the little shop upon whose door-step he spent all his leisure hours lounging against the low door-post, and he instantly became only a stupid workman, a man incapable of understanding an argument and insensible to all pleasures of the mind; one who would go to sleep at the theater, and whose brain seemed to be absolutely devoid of ideas.

There are many men like this, and among them will almost invariably be found, deep down in their hearts, some trait of character more or less sublime; and even as the business of the vermicelli-maker absorbed all the intelligence of his brains, so two sentiments filled his heart, to the exclusion of all else: they were, conjugal and parental love.

His wife, the only daughter of a rich farmer of La Brie, was the object of his boundless love and almost religious admiration. She had a nature at once fragile and strong, sensitive and beautiful; it contrasted forcibly with his own, and demanded his protection as well as his cherishing love; and that which calls

into exercise a man's proud protection of a loved one is an education and an uplifting for his nature. If his wife had lived she might have been the means of cultivating his inert mind, and of inspiring it with intelligence and interest in life and the world; but she died after seven years of unalloyed happiness, leaving two little girls, upon whom Goriot henceforth lavished all the wealth of tenderness and love which had heretofore flowed in another and an undivided channel.

They amply rewarded his devotion at first, and he steadfastly refused the alluring offers made to him from time to time by rich farmers and merchants on behalf of their daughters, resolutely determining upon remaining a widower to the end of his life. And once, when a daring individual presumed to jest with him upon the sacred subject, he gave him a blow which sent him head-first across the street.

His daughters' education was out of all proportion to their station in life; for Goriot, with an income of sixty thousand pounds, of which he spent not more than twelve hundred francs upon himself, found his sole happiness in ministering to his daughters' desires; they had the best masters that money could procure, and a lady companion who, fortunately, was possessed of a fine mind and perfect taste. They had horses and carriages, and were brought up with as much luxury as if they had been the daughters of a great lord; they had only to express their desires, no matter how extravagant, and they were gratified if it was within their father's power: he asked only a caress in return for all that he could give, for he looked upon his daughters as angels, and as so far above him, poor man! that he adored them even when they made him most unhappy.

When the two young girls were at a marriageable age they had perfect liberty to choose their husbands according to their own taste; and each of them was promised the half of her father's fortune as her dowry. Anastasie, wooed for her beauty by the Comte de Restaud, and enchanted at the prospect of future social triumphs, left her father's house to try her fortunes in a more aristocratic sphere. Delphine loved money, and for its sake she married Nucingen, a banker of German extraction, who had been made a baron under the Empire.

Goriot still clung to his business: his daughters and sons-in-law were violently opposed to its continuance; but the old man's very life was bound up in his daily occupations. However, after having endured their remonstrances for five years or more, he finally yielded the point, and consented to retire and to live upon the proceeds of the sale, and the accumulated savings of the past few years. This was the capital which Madame Vauquer, at whose house he established himself, had ascertained to be between eight and ten thousand francs a year. He had retired to this boarding-house, when he despairingly learned that the husbands of his two daughters had refused not only to receive him as an inmate of their homes, but even to admit him there as an open visitor.

This information was all that Eugene could gather from the gentleman who had bought Pere Goriot's business; but it was enough to confirm the account which he had already received from the Duchesse de Langeais of this obscure but heart-rending tragedy of Paris.

VIII.

At the end of the first week in the month of December, Rastignac received two letters, one from his mother, and one from his elder sister. The sight of the well-known writing made him both rejoice and tremble; for within the folds of the two letters he would find either a death-warrant or a lease of life to his new-born hopes and ambitions. His mother's letter ran as follows:

"My dear Boy—I send you what you asked for. Make good use of the money, for, if it were to save your life, I could

not get any more for you without asking your father for it; and he would be obliged to mortgage the property to raise it. It is of course impossible for me to judge of the merit of projects of which I am ignorant; but of what nature can they be, since you fear to confide them to me? The explanation of which you speak would not require volumes—one word would be sufficient to make a mother understand, and that one word would save me all this anguish of uncertainty. I cannot tell you how unhappy your letter has made me. My dear son, what can it be that has induced you to cause me such anxiety and fear? You must have suffered in writing that letter; I understand that, by the suffering which it has given me to read it. In what career are you about to engage? Are your life and happiness to be bound up in a struggle to keep up an appearance in a world where you cannot go without engaging in expense which you cannot afford, and where you cannot fail to lose precious time from your studies? My son, depend upon the words of a mother, crooked ways never lead to anything great. Patience and resignation should be the watchwords of a young man in your position.

"I do not mean to scold you, dear; I would not add any bitterness to your acceptance of our offering; my words are those of a confiding as well as far-seeing mother; and if you, for your part, realize your obligations to us, I know equally well the purity of your heart, and the excellence of your intentions. And so I can say to you without fear: 'Go on, my dearest.'

"I tremble because I am a mother; but each of your steps will be tenderly accompanied by our good wishes and our blessings. Be prudent, dear child; you ought to be a wise man, for the destinies of five who are dear to you rest on your head. Yes, our fortunes are wrapped up in you, even as your happiness is ours. We all pray God to aid you in your undertakings.

"Your aunt Marcillac has been wonderfully good, on this occasion. Eugene, you ought to love her dearly. I shall not tell you what she has done for you, unless you succeed in your projects; for if you knew now, her money would burn your fingers. You children do not know what it is to sacrifice keepsakes; but there is nothing that we would not give up for you. She desires me to tell you that she sends you a kiss, and only wishes that it had the power to procure happiness for you. She would write to you herself, if her fingers were not stiff with rheumatism. Your father is well, and the harvest of 1819 more than equaled our expectations. I will say nothing of your sisters, for Laura is writing to you now, and I will leave to her the pleasure of telling you all the little items of family news.

"Heaven grant that you may succeed; you must succeed, my Eugene; for I never could endure this unhappiness a second time. Now I realize indeed what it is to be poor, when I long for money to give to my child. Adieu, my boy; do not leave us without news; and accept with this a mother's kiss and blessing."

When Eugene had finished reading this letter, tears were rolling down his cheeks. He thought of Pere Goriot, and the silver which he had twisted up and sold to pay his daughter's debts, and he said to himself:

"My mother has sacrificed her jewels, and my aunt has sold some of her precious keepsakes for me. What right have I to blame Anastasie? Am I any better than she?"

He felt an intolerable sense of shame at the thought of taking this money, and for the moment was ready to give up the world with all its ambitious schemes, rather than endure the remorse which he suffered at the thought of the sacrifices which had been made on his behalf.

At length he opened his sister's letter, and its sweet and innocent words came like balm to his heart:

"Your letter came just at the right time, dear brother," it said. "Agatha and I wanted to use our money in so many different ways, we could not make

up our minds which to choose. You were like the servant of the king of Spain, when he overturned all his master's watches; you made us agree. Truly, we were all the time quarreling about the way in which we should spend our money, and we could not agree upon anything which would suit us both; so that when your letter came, Agatha fairly leaped for joy; we were like two crazy girls all day long, to such an extent that mother said severely: 'Children, what in the world is the matter with you?' And I do believe that if we had even had a little scolding, we should have been only the happier for it; for a woman ought to like to suffer for the one she loves!

"I have only one regret in the midst of my joy. I shall certainly not make a good wife, I am so extravagant. I had bought already two belts, a pretty bodkin to pierce eyelet holes in my corsets, and ever so many silly things besides, so that I had less money than Agatha, who is very economical, and hoards up her money like a little magpie. She had two hundred francs, while poor I have only a hundred and fifty. I am well punished, and would like to throw my belt into the well, for I shall never take any pleasure in wearing it now. I shall feel as if I had stolen it from you. Agatha was lovely; she said: 'Send the three hundred and fifty francs, from both of us.' But of course I could not do that, you know.

"And now I must tell you how we managed, in order to carry out your wishes for secrecy. We took our precious money, and went out for a walk together; as soon as we had reached the high-road, we set off at a run for Ruffec, where we gave the sum to Monsieur Grimbert, who keeps the office of the Royal Mail-coach. And then we came back again, as light as two swallows. I shall not tell you all the things we said about you! My dear brother, we love you dearly, and that is the sum and substance of it all. As for keeping the secret, according to our aunt, little witches like us are capable of anything, even of holding our tongues! She and our mother have taken a mysterious trip to Angoulême, after long consultations from which we, as well as Monsieur le Baron, were banished, and they have kept strict silence upon the subject of their mission.

"Many important things are occurring in the kingdom of Rastignac. The muslin dress, upon which the Infantas are embroidering morning-glories for her majesty the queen, is being made in the most profound secrecy, and is done all but two breadths. It has been decided not to put up a wall on the side of Verteuil; they are going to have a hedge instead. The common people will lose fruits and espaliers thereby, but strangers will get a better view of the country! If the heir-presumptive needs any handkerchiefs, it is hereby proclaimed that the Dowager de Marcillac, in rummaging through her trunks and boxes, popularly known as Herculaneum and Pompeii, has found a beautiful piece of linen, which she did not know was there; and the Princesses Agatha and Laura will put their needles, thread, and slightly reddened hands at his service. The two young princes, Don Henri and Don Gabriel, have thus far persevered in the bad habits of stuffing themselves with preserves, of teasing their sisters, of refusing to learn their lessons, of amusing themselves with snaring birds, of making a great clatter and noise, and of cutting osiers to make little switches, in spite of those laws of the kingdom which forbid it.

"And now adieu, dear brother; never did letter hold more wishes for your happiness, or more love than this contains. When you come to see us again, I shall expect you to have a great many things to tell us. My aunt has hinted at certain social successes, and we want to hear all about them when we see you.

"By the way, Eugene, if you would prefer it, we might give up the handkerchiefs, and make you some shirts instead. Please decide quickly, and let us know, for if we are to make you some nice shirts, and to make them well, we ought to begin them at once; and if there is any new-fashioned way in Paris of making them, you had better buy one, and send it as a pattern.

"Once more, adieu. I send you a kiss for the left side of your forehead, on the particular temple which belongs to me. I will leave the other page for Agatha, who has promised not to read what I have written; but, to make sure, I shall sit by her while she writes.

"Your loving sister,

"LAURA DE RASTIGNAC."

"Ah," sighed Eugene to himself; "good fortune is sometimes dearly bought. Untold treasures would not repay this devotion. How I wish I could bestow every happiness upon them all. Fifteen hundred and fifty francs!" he added, after a pause; "each piece is like a blow. Laura is right; what a creature a woman is! I have nothing but coarse linen shirts. To secure the happiness of one whom she loves, a young girl will scheme like a little thief. Innocent for herself, and prudent for me, she is like the angels of heaven, who pardon mortal sins without understanding them."

The world was his! Already his tailor had been interviewed, for in seeing Monsieur de Trailles Rastignac had come to understand the influence which a tailor has upon a young man's destiny. With fifteen hundred francs and plenty of clothes, the young student despaired of nothing, and went down to breakfast with that indefinable air which the consciousness of money in his pockets gives to a young man. He feels within him a support upon which he can lean. He walks more confidently than before, and has a fearless and direct glance and quick movements; on the previous day, humble and timid, he would have endured blows unresistingly; to-morrow, he would give them to a prime minister; he is gay, generous and genial. In short, the bird so lately unable to fly has suddenly discovered that he possesses a pair of wings.

The student who has no money seizes a bit of pleasure as a dog would run away with a bone gained at the risk of his life, crunching it, sucking the marrow, and running on again in search of another; but the young man who can finger a few gold pieces in his pocket tastes his pleasures with a relish, delights in them, rises to the seventh heaven of happiness, and forgets all about what the word "misery" means; and all Paris seems to belong exclusively to him.

While they were at breakfast a clerk from the royal mail-offices walked into the dining-room, after having rung at the outer gate. He asked for Monsieur Eugene de Rastignac, to whom he handed two bags, and a register for his signature.

Eugene was immediately lashed as by a whip with the searching look which Vautrin threw upon him.

"Now you will have the means to pay for lessons in fencing and pistol-shooting," the latter remarked.

"His ship has come in," said Madame Vauquer, eying the two bags.

As for Mademoiselle Michonneau, she was afraid even to look at the money, for fear of showing how much she coveted it.

"You have a good mother," remarked Madame Couture.

"You have an excellent mother," echoed Poiret.

"Yes, mamma has been bled," said Vautrin. "Now you can keep up your little game, go into the great world, fish for an heiress, and dance with countesses who have peach-blossoms in their hair. But take my advice, young man, and don't neglect the shooting-gallery;" and Vautrin made a significant gesture, as though he were aiming at an adversary.

Rastignac was searching in his pockets all this time for a pourboire to give the messenger, but could not find so much as a sou. Vautrin fumbled in his own, and tossed twenty sous to the man. As he did so, he said, negligently:

"Your credit is good."

Eugene was obliged to accept the accommodation, and to thank him, although since the day of his visit to Madame de Beauseant, when they had exchanged such sharp words, the man had been unbearable to him. During the week which had elapsed since then, Eugene and Vautrin had remained silent, but watchful of each other; although the student had vainly asked himself the reason for this state of things.

Ideas project themselves in direct ratio to the force with which they are conceived, and strike where the brain sends them, by a mathematical law like that which directs the flight of bombs from a mortar; and they produce various effects.

While ideas lodge and make sad havoc in tender natures, they are flattened against hard, iron wills like balls against a wall; and again, they die away against yielding and cottony natures like bullets sent into the soft earth of a redoubt.

Eugene's nature had that fire and southern vivacity which marches straight at a difficulty, to grapple with it, and to conquer it if it be vulnerable; at all events, to tear any veil of mystery from its face—a nature of which northerners strongly disapprove: they reason that if its possession was the origin of Murat's fortune, it was also the cause of his death.

Rastignac, then, could not remain long under the fire of Vautrin's batteries without seeking to know whether the man was his friend or his enemy.

He felt more and more as if this singular individual was penetrating his thoughts and reading his very heart, while keeping himself inclosed in a mysterious silence which seemed to have the secrecy and immobility of a sphinx, seeing everything and saying nothing. And with his pockets full of money, Eugene felt himself in a position to begin to mutiny.

"Be good enough to wait, if you please," he said, seeing Vautrin about to leave the room after draining his coffee-cup.

"Why?" returned the other, putting on his broad-brimmed hat, and taking up the iron cane which he was in the habit of twirling like a man who feels himself armed against all assaults.

"I am going to pay you," replied Rastignac, who had opened one of the bags and counted out a hundred and forty francs to Madame Vauquer, saying to the widow as he did so:

"Prompt payment makes good friends; now we are quits until St. Sylvester's Day. Change this piece for a hundred sous, if you please."

"Good friends make prompt payment," repeated Poiret looking at Vautrin.

"Here are your twenty sous," said Rastignac, holding out the coin to the modern sphinx.

"It looks as if you feared to owe me anything," remarked Vautrin, with a look which seemed to search the soul of the young man, and with one of those jeering, bantering smiles which had more than once roused Eugene's anger.

"I do," replied the student, taking up his two bags of money and rising to go to his own room.

Vautrin was on his way toward the drawing-room, and Eugene was about to leave the dining-room by the other door, which led toward the staircase, when he was stopped by Vautrin. The latter slammed the drawing-room door, and walking straight up to the student, who looked coldly at him, remarked:

"Do you know, Monsieur le Marquis, that what you have just said to me is not exactly polite?"

Rastignac took Vautrin by the arm and led him to the foot of the staircase, shutting the dining-room door, and standing in the little square passage between the dining-room and kitchen, before a door which led into the garden. There, he said in the presence of Sylvia, who was just coming out of her kitchen:

"Monsieur Vautrin, I am not a marquis, and I will not be called by that title."

"They are going to fight," remarked Mademoiselle Michonneau, serenely.

"To fight!" repeated Poiret.

"Oh, no! I hope not," replied Madame Vauquer, gloating over her pile of money.

"There they go, out under the lindens!" cried Mademoiselle Victorine, rising to look out of the window. "The poor young man was in the right, though," she added.

"Come, dear, let us go upstairs," said Madame Couture. "The affair is none of our business."

As Madame Couture and Victorine started to leave the room they were met at the door by the fat cook, who barred their passage.

"What do you think!" she exclaimed. "Monsieur Vautrin said to Monsieur Eugene, 'Let us have an explanation;' and then he took him by the arm, and they marched off into the garden."

At this moment Vautrin appeared before them.

"Madame Vauquer," he said, smilingly, "do not be alarmed if you hear shots. I am only going to try my pistols under the lindens."

"Oh! sir," exclaimed Victorine, clasping her hands, "why do you want to kill Monsieur Eugene?"

Vautrin took a step backward, and looked at Victorine in surprise. Then he cried in a tone of raillery which made the young girl blush:

"Here is another little story! He is a nice young man, is he not?" he added. "You have given me an idea. I will immediately proceed to make you both happy, my child."

Madame Couture had by this time got her protégée by the arm, and drew her angrily away, saying in her ear:

"Really, Victorine, you are incomprehensible this morning!"

"I do not want any one to fire pistols here," said Madame Vauquer. "It would alarm the neighborhood and bring the police, would it not?"

"There! calm yourself," said Vautrin, soothingly: "it is all right, we will go to the shooting-gallery instead." Then he rejoined Rastignac, and taking him familiarly by the arm, he said:

"If I were to prove to you that at thirty-five paces I can put a ball into the bull's-eye five times in succession, I believe it would not take away your courage; you look angry enough to let yourself be killed like a fool!"

"You are afraid!" said Eugene.

"Now, don't try to make me angry," returned Vautrin. "It is not very cold this morning; suppose we go and sit yonder," pointing to the green seats. "No one can hear us there, and I have something to say to you. You are a fine fellow, and I don't want to hurt you; in fact, I rather like you, upon my word I do, and I will tell you why. In the meantime you may take my word for it that I understand you as well as if I had made you, and I am going to prove it to you. Put your bags there," he added, pointing to the round table.

Rastignac did as he was bidden, and seated himself, intensely curious to know the meaning of the sudden change which had come over this man, who, after talking of killing him, was now posing as his friend and patron.

IX.

"I SUPPOSE you would like to know who I am, what I have done, and what I am doing," began Vautrin; "but you must not be too curious. I shall tell you a good many things before I am done, and I want you to listen to me first, and to reply afterward.

"Like all men, I have had my sorrows and misfortunes; and there you have the account of my past. As for the present: 'What am I?'—Vautrin. 'What do I do?'—Exactly what I please. Now to proceed. Would you know my character? I am good beyond measure to those who are good to me, but a very devil to those who thwart me, or to those whom I hate. And I might as well tell you that I no more mind killing a man than I mind doing that;" and he spit carelessly upon the ground as he spoke. "Only, I kill him neatly, if I have to kill him at all. I am what you might call an artist. I consider the duel child's play, foolishness; if one man out of two is to die, how ridiculous to leave the choice to chance! A duel is nothing but a game of pitch and toss. Now, I can put five successive balls through a bull's-eye, one over the other, at a distance of thirty-five feet, and one would think that with that little talent I might feel reasonably sure of bringing down my man; and yet, I once fired at a man at only twenty paces and missed him; while he, a rascal who had never before fired a pistol—he ruffled my plumage. Look!" and the extraordinary man bared his chest, which was as hairy

as a bear's back, and made Rastignac put his finger into a hole made by a pistol-ball.

"At that time," he resumed carelessly, "I was a mere child, only just your age—twenty-one, and my head was full of women's love, and of a heap of nonsense which I have bravely outgrown. Now, if we were to fight, you might, perhaps, kill me, and what then? You would have to run away; go to Switzerland, and live on your father's money, of which there is none too much as it is. Instead of all that, I want to talk to you, and to show you your true position, and to do it as a man who, having a superior knowledge of the world, knows that there are only two paths—blind obedience or revolt. For my part, I never obey. Now, do you know what you need in order to go on as you have begun, and as you propose to continue? A million livres, and at once; and that million I can give you."

He paused, regarding Eugene searchingly: "Aha! that puts a different look upon Vautrin, does it not?" he said, with a slight laugh. "Ah! well, come! Here is your situation, young man. There are yonder, in the country, papa, mamma, great-aunt, two sisters (aged eighteen and seventeen) and two little brothers (of fifteen and ten years). This is the way of it: the aunt looks after the two sisters; the curé comes and teaches Latin to the two boys; the family eats more chestnut broth than wheaten bread; papa is very careful of his clothes; mamma scarcely manages to have a winter and a summer dress, and the sisters get along as best they can. I know all about it, for I have been in the South, and things must be like that if they send you twelve hundred francs a year from a property which barely yields three thousand.

"As for you, you are ambitious; you are related to the Beauseants, and you have to go there on foot. You long for a fortune and have not a sou. You eat Madame Vauquer's rubbish, and wish for the fine dinners of the Faubourg Saint Germain. You go to sleep in a garret, longing for a mansion. I don't blame you. It is not everybody who is capable of being ambitious. Ask women what kind of a man they like best, and they will tell you 'one who has ambition.' Ambitious men are stronger, richer-blooded and more fiery-hearted than others, and a woman prefers a man of enormous force, even though she be in danger of being crushed by it.

"I have made an inventory of your desires, in order to ask you a question. The question is this: you have the appetite of a wolf; how are you going to appease it? In the first place, you can feed upon your law-studies; this is not amusing, but it can be done. Very well! After awhile you are a lawyer, and preside over a Court of Assizes, where you can send poor devils to prison, for the sake of allowing rich people to sleep tranquilly. This is not much fun, and it takes a long time. To begin with, two years of drudgery in Paris, during which you may gaze upon forbidden fruit, but must not touch it. And it is very tiresome to be always desiring and never attaining. Then, if you have the courage to live through that, you will, after trials and privations enough to make a dog mad, finally become the substitute of some rogue or other, in a hole of a town where the Government will fling you an appointment worth a thousand francs or so, as one would throw a sop to a mastiff. When you are about thirty years old, you will be a judge, at twelve hundred francs a year—if you have not by that time thrown your robe to the four winds. At forty you will marry some rich miller's daughter with a dowry of six thousand a year. If you can command patronage, you may perhaps be a king's-solicitor at thirty, with a place worth a thousand ecus. If you do not hesitate at some little political meanness or other, you will be solicitor-general at forty, and it is just possible you may become a deputy. In the meantime, you will have done violence to all your desires and wishes, you will have had twenty years of weariness and of secret misery, and your sisters will by that time have entered a convent, and become lost to you forever. I have furthermore the honor to inform you that there are only twenty

solicitor-generals in France, and that there are twenty thousand aspirants for the place, most of whom are unscrupulous enough to stoop to any vileness for the sake of mounting a step on the ladder of success.

"If that picture disgusts you, let us think of something else. Perhaps the Baron de Rastignac would prefer to be an attorney. Very well! You will have to languish in obscurity for ten years, to spend a thousand francs per month, to have a library and a study, to go into the world, to kiss the hem of a successful lawyer's robe in order to procure cases, and to sweep the courts with your tongue. If the trade was a profitable one, I would not say anything against it; but where will you find in Paris five lawyers who, at fifty years of age, get more than fifty thousand francs a year? Bah! rather than belittle myself thus, I would go and be a pirate. Besides, where would you get the money to do it? It is not such an easy matter. There is one resource in the dowry of a wife. If you marry, it will be like hanging a millstone about your neck; besides, if you marry for money, what becomes of all your fine ideas of honor and nobility? And after it was done, after you had lain down like a serpent before a woman, after you had licked the feet of her mother, and been guilty of a thousand detestable meannesses, what then? You would not be happy with a woman whom you had married thus; you would continually be at war, and it is better to battle with the world than with one's wife.

"Behold the cross-roads of your life, young man; choose between them!

"You have already chosen. You went to your cousin's house and tasted of luxury. You went to the house of Madame de Restaud, Pere Goriot's daughter, and you saw a true Parisian woman; and then you came back here with one word written on your forehead; a word which I could plainly read, and the word was, 'Success! Success at any price!' And I said to myself, 'Bravo! Here is a fellow after my own heart.'

"You wanted money, but where were you to get it? You bled your sisters for it; all brothers do that, more or less. But your fifteen hundred francs, torn, God knows how! from a country where there are more chestnut-trees than sous, will disappear as if they were attacked by soldiers on a marauding expedition. And then what are you going to do? Are you going to work? That means an apartment in Madame Vauquer's house, and association with people like Poiret.

"A rapid fortune is the problem set before some fifty thousand young men in your position to-day, and you are only a unit out of that great number. Think of the efforts which you would have to make among so many. You would all be tearing each other to pieces, like so many spiders in a web—for there are not fifty thousand good places.

"Do you know how a man is to make his way in this world? Either by the brilliancy of genius, or by the cleverness of corruption. You must either enter this great mass of men like a bullet from a cannon, or creep among them like a pestilence. They adore genius and bend beneath it—when they are not strong enough to bury it in the mud. Genius is a surer weapon than corruption, but a rarer one. Corruption is the weapon of mediocrity, and it is so common! You see it everywhere. I defy you to go two steps in Paris without meeting it. You see clerks, with a salary of twelve hundred francs, buying landed property. You see that poor old wretch of a Pere Goriot obliged to pay the bill of exchange indorsed by his daughter, who has a husband worth a hundred thousand pounds a year. Honesty is at a discount everywhere. If you wish a fortune at once, you must either be already rich, or else pretend to be. To get rich here, it is necessary to strike a bold, sudden blow; if, in the hundred professions which you might embrace, there are ten men who succeed quickly, the public calls them thieves. Draw your own conclusions. I tell you of life as it is. If I speak to you then of the world, it is because it has given me the right to do so, and because I am well acquainted with it. But if you

think I blame it, you are very much mistaken. It always has been so, and it always will be. The moralists will never change it, for man himself is inherently imperfect.

"And now, after having put all these before you, I am going to make you a proposition, which no man in his senses would refuse. Pay attention, if you please. I, Vautrin, have an idea, a wish, which you can help me to realize, if you will. My idea is this: to go somewhere, and live a truly patriarchal life on some large domain—a hundred thousand acres, for example, in the southern part of the United States. There, I could be a planter, have slaves, make my little pile by selling cattle, tobacco, and lumber, and live like a sovereign, doing exactly as I pleased and leading a life which is almost inconceivable here. I am a great poet, but my poetry is the unwritten kind which shows itself in actions and sentiments.

"Now, I have at this moment forty thousand francs, with which I could scarcely buy forty negroes. I need two hundred thousand francs, because my idea of patriarchal life will not be satisfied with less than two hundred negroes. Negroes, you understand, are children all ready-made, with whom I can do exactly as I please, without being called to give an account of my proceedings to any one.

"With this black capital, I should in ten years have three or four millions, and if I am successful, no one will ask me who I am; I shall be Monsieur Millionaire of the United States. I shall be fifty years old, not yet beyond the prime of life, and I can amuse myself as I please.

"Now I come to my point, which is this: If I procure you a dowry of a million, will you give me two hundred thousand francs of it? Twenty per cent commission, you see. Is it too much? You will woo your little wife, and make her fall in love with you; and once married, it will be easy enough to coax and cajole her into giving you all the money you want. A young woman never refuses her purse to the man who has taken her heart. With your money and your talents you will soon be able to amass as large a fortune as you can wish. And so, in six months' time, you will have made the happiness of three people: yourself, your dear little wife, and your most obedient Vautrin; to say nothing of your family, who shiver through the winter for want of wood.

"Do not marvel at what I have proposed. Out of sixty happy marriages which take place in Paris, forty-seven, at least, are arranged on the same—"

"What must I do?" asked Rastignac, eagerly interrupting Vautrin.

"Almost nothing," replied the other, with the scarcely perceptible movement of exultation of a fisherman who feels a bite at the end of his line.

"Listen! The heart of a poor girl who is unhappy and miserable will drink in love as a sponge sucks in water. To pay court to a young girl, whom you meet under conditions of solitude, despair, and poverty, and without a suspicion on her part that she may eventually possess a fortune—why! it is to have the game in your own hands; to know all the numbers at a lottery; to gamble in stocks with a foreknowledge of the changes that are to come! Propose a marriage upon this foundation, and when millions come to her, she will throw them all at your feet, like so many pebbles, because you had the goodness to sacrifice yourself to her in the time of her poverty."

"But where to find the young girl?" asked Eugene.

"She is yours—before you!"

"Mademoiselle Victorine?"

"Exactly!"

"What do you mean?"

"She loves you already, and will make a dear little Baroness de Rastignac."

"But she has not a sou to her name!" returned Eugene in astonishment.

"Ah! we shall see about that," replied Vautrin. "A few more words, and all will be clear. Taillefer, the father, is an old rascal who is said to have assassinated one of his friends during the Revolution. He is a banker, and the

principal partner in the firm of Frederic Taillefer & Co. He has an only son, to whom he proposes to leave all his property, to the exclusion of Victorine. Now, I don't believe in such injustice; I am like Don Quixote, always ready to take up arms in behalf of the feeble against the strong. If it should be the will of God to deprive Taillefer of his son, he would reinstate Victorine, for it is a law of nature that a man wants some one belonging to him to inherit his property.

"Victorine is sweet and gentle, and she would very soon be able to wind her father around her finger. But she will care too much about your love to forget you, and you will marry her. As for me, I will take it upon myself to carry out the designs of Providence, as far as getting the young man out of the way is concerned I have a devoted friend, a colonel in the army of the Loire, who would do anything in the world for me. A single word from me, and he will find some means or other to pick a quarrel with this young fellow, who does not send so much as a hundred sous a year to his poor sister, and—" Here Vautrin rose, and took an attitude of defense—"and—to the shades!" he added.

"Horrible!" exclaimed Eugene. "You are surely joking, Monsieur Vautrin?"

"There, there! don't get excited," returned the other. "Don't be a baby; however, if it will be any relief to your feelings, put yourself in a passion, if you like! Call me infamous, a rascal, a knave, a bandit, if it makes you feel any better; but do not call me a swindler or a spy. Come! say it if you want to! I will pardon you; it is so natural at your age! I have been like that myself. But just reflect for a moment. You will do worse than that, some day, if you carry out your present plans. Better a bold stroke and a prompt one, than a slow progress through all the degrees of social infamy which are practiced every day in the pursuit of pleasure or of personal interest. Your future assassinations may be bloodless, but they will be none the less guilty; and it is only the question of a little blood, more or less. The secret of great fortunes reared without apparent cause is always a crime, which is forgotten because it was neatly done."

"Silence, sir!" exclaimed Eugene. "I will not listen to another word. You would make me doubt even myself."

"Just as you please," answered Vautrin. "I deemed you stronger; but I will say no more. Just one last word, however;" and he looked fixedly at the student. "You have my secret," he said, then.

"One who refuses you will know how to forget it," replied Eugene, simply.

"That is well said," returned the other, in a tone of satisfaction. "Others might have been less scrupulous. And now, remember what I am willing to do for you. I give you a fortnight, in which to take it or leave it."

"What a man that is!" said Rastignac, watching Vautrin as he went tranquilly out of the garden, with his cane under his arm. "He has told me in so many words what Madame de Beauseant only hinted. He has torn my heart as with steel claws. He has taught me more than I ever learned from men or books. According to him, I must either choose to do wrong, or to steal from my sisters;" and he threw the money down again upon the table. Then he reseated himself, and remained motionless, lost in thought.

"Faithful in virtue!" he mused. "Everybody believes in virtue; but who is virtuous? The nations hold up liberty as an idol; but where on the face of the globe is there a free people? My youth is still unclouded, like an early morning sky; in order to be great or rich, must I degrade myself to lie, to bend, to creep, to flatter, to dissimulate? Must I consent to serve those who have lied and deceived? No! I will work, nobly and purely; I will work day and night, and owe my fortune solely to my own labor. It will be slow progress, but each night I can lay my head upon my pillow without an evil thought, and without a feeling of shame. What is more beautiful than a life that is pure as a lily? My life and I are like a

young man and his bride; I will keep my honor intact."

Eugene was startled from his reverie by a call from the fat cook, who announced that his tailor was within, and he went to him, carrying his two money bags in his hands. When he had tried on his evening suit, he dressed himself in his new morning attire, which metamorphosed him completely, and made him say to himself complacently:

"I am as good as Monsieur Trailles now. I look like a gentleman at last."

X.

"MONSIEUR," said Pere Goriot, entering Eugene's room, "you asked me if I knew of any house where Madame de Nucingen would be likely to be going."

"Yes," eagerly replied Rastignac.

"Well, next Monday she is going to the Marshal Carigliano's ball. If you go, you can tell me how my daughters look, and whether they seem to be enjoying themselves, and all about them."

"How did you know of this, Pere Goriot?" asked Eugene, making the old man sit down by the fire.

"Her maid told me. I know all about everything that they are doing, through Therese and Constance," he replied gleefully. The poor old man was like a lover exulting in some stratagem by which he can draw near to his sweetheart without her knowledge.

"You will see them!" he went on enviously.

"I don't know about it," replied Eugene. "I am going now to Madame de Beauseant, to see if she can present me to the marshal's wife."

It was with a sort of secret pride that he thought of appearing before the vicomtesse in his new clothes. What moralists call the abysses of the human heart, are only the deceiving thoughts and the involuntary movements of personal interest. Now that he was well-dressed, well-gloved and well-booted, Rastignac forgot his virtuous resolutions.

For several days Eugene and Pere Goriot had been very good friends. Their comradeship had been based upon the same psychological reasons which had engendered the opposite results between Vautrin and the student. It is the same sort of instinct by which a dog knows who is his friend and who is his enemy; something mysterious, inexplicable, involuntary.

Pere Goriot had instinctively felt the compassion and the good-hearted sympathy which had been aroused toward him in the young student's heart; but the growing alliance had not yet led to any interchange of confidences. Eugene had, to be sure, expressed a desire to meet Madame de Nucingen, but it was not so much in the hope of being introduced to her house by the old man's means, as with the idea of profiting by any chance remark which might arise. Pere Goriot had not spoken to him of his daughters, except in reference to what Eugene had said concerning them, on his return from his two calls.

"My dear sir," the old man had said to him on the next day, "how could you have thought that Madame de Restaud objected to your mention of my name? My two daughters and I are the best of friends; and I am a very happy father. It is true that my sons-in-law have not behaved well to me; and as I do not wish to be the cause of dissensions between my daughters and their husbands, I prefer to meet them secretly; and this air of mystery has a thousand delights which those fathers who can see their daughters openly whenever they like could never understand.

"I go, whenever the weather is fine, to the Champs Elysées, after having first ascertained from their maids whether my daughters have gone out. I wait with a beating heart by the side of the road until their carriages pass, and I admire their beautiful toilets, and bask in the light of the little nod and smile which they give me as they go by. Sometimes I wait until they come back again, and look at the lovely roses which the fresh air has called into their cheeks, and listen to those

around me as they whisper: 'What a beautiful woman!' And the praise makes me happy; for are they not my own flesh and blood? I love the very horses that draw them, and envy the little dog that sits upon their lap.

"Everybody has his own way of loving; mine harms no one; why need people disturb themselves about me? I am happy in my own way. Is it against the law for me to go this evening, for example, to watch them as they come out of their houses to go to a ball? How unhappy it makes me when I get there too late, and they tell me madame has gone! One night I even waited until three o'clock in the morning, watching for Anastasie—my little Nasie—whom I had not seen for two days. I beg of you, do not think for a moment that my daughters are anything but good to me. They would overwhelm me with gifts if I would let them, but I always say to them: 'Keep your money! What could I do with it? I don't need anything.'

"When you have seen Madame de Nucingen, you can tell me which of the two you prefer," he resumed after a moment of silence, during which Eugene was preparing to set out for the Tuileries, in order to pass away the time there until the proper hour had arrived to present himself to Madame de Beauseant.

This promenade put the finishing touch to the young student's wavering resolutions. Several women noticed him—his beauty, his youth, his elegance, and his good style. And as he saw himself the object of an almost admiring attention, he forgot his despoiled sisters and aunt, and thought no more of his virtuous scruples. He had seen that demon whom it is so easy to mistake for an angel pass above his head, and had listened to that insidious vanity whose tinkle sounds like the cymbal of power; and Vautrin's words became indelibly lodged in his heart.

After having loitered indolently along until nearly five o'clock, Eugene presented himself at Madame de Beauseant's house, and received there one of those terrible blows against which youth has no armor. Hitherto he had always found the vicomtesse abounding in that polished politeness and sweet grace given by an aristocratic education, which is complete only when it comes from the heart. To-day, however, when he entered, Madame de Beauseant said briefly, and with a curt little gesture:

"Monsieur de Rastignac, it is impossible for me to see you at present; I am busy."

For a keen observer, such as Rastignac was rapidly becoming, this remark, the gesture, the look, the very inflection of the voice, betrayed the history of the character and the habits of rank. He perceived the iron hand under the velvet glove; the personality and the egotism under the polished manners; the wood beneath the varnish. But he wanted to go to the Duchesse de Carigliano's ball, therefore he swallowed the affront, and said, tremulously:

"Madame, if it had not been for something of great importance I should not have disturbed you to-day. If you will be good enough to let me see you by and by, I can wait."

"Very well! come and dine with me," she said, a little ashamed of the abruptness of her first greeting; for she was kind as well as great.

Although touched by this sudden return to graciousness, Eugene said bitterly to himself as he went away:

"Creep and crawl and endure everything! What must the others be, if in a moment this best of women forgets all about her promises of friendship, and flings me away like an old shoe! It is, then, just as Vautrin said: each one for himself."

But these unhappy reflections were soon forgotten in the pleasure with which he anticipated dining with the vicomtesse. And so, by a sort of fatality, each little event seemed to conspire to push him onward toward that career where, according to the observations of his mentor at the Maison Vauquer, he must, as on a field of battle, kill in order not to be killed, and deceive to avoid being deceived; where he must play his game

without pity, and seize fortune wherever it was to be found.

When he returned to the vicomtesse's house, he found her full of the same gracious kindness which she had always shown to him. They went together into the dining-room, where the vicomte was awaiting his wife, and where Eugene viewed for the first time that brilliancy of table luxury which reached its height under the Restoration. Monsieur de Beauseant, like most *blasé* people, was devoted to the pleasures of good living; he belonged, in fact, to the school of gourmands of Louis XVIII. and the Duke d'Escars. Consequently his table was doubly luxurious, both for its brilliancy and for its contents.

Eugene, who was dining for the first time at one of those houses where social grandeur is hereditary, had never seen anything like it. The tact which so eminently distinguished him later, and which he was already beginning to develop, prevented him from betraying any stupid amazement; but in viewing the wealth of sculptured silver, and the thousand elegances of a sumptuous table, and in admiring for the first time a service perfectly and noiselessly performed, it would have been a difficult matter for a man of his ardent imagination not to prefer this life of unvarying luxury to the privation which awaited him with the morning. His thoughts flew back for a moment with such horror to his boarding-house that he vowed to himself to leave it on the following month, to establish himself in a suitable place as well as to escape Vautrin, whose large hand he seemed still to feel upon his shoulder.

Madame de Beauseant tried in vain to draw Eugene into conversation; he would say nothing before the vicomte.

"Will you go to the Italiens with me this evening?" the countess asked her husband after awhile.

"You know what infinite pleasure it would give me," he returned with a mocking and exaggerated gallantry, assumed for Eugene's benefit; "but I have promised to meet some one at the Variétés. Are you not, then, expecting Adjuda this evening?" he asked after a pause.

"No," she replied, briefly.

"Well, if an escort is absolutely necessary to you, take Monsieur de Rastignac," he returned.

The countess looked smilingly at Eugene.

"It will be rather compromising for you," she remarked.

"Chateaubriand has said, 'A Frenchman loves peril, because he finds glory in it!'" replied Rastignac, bowing.

Some moments afterward he was driving rapidly in a coupé with Madame de Beauseant toward the fashionable theater, and almost thought himself in fairyland when he entered one of the front boxes and saw that he shared with the vicomtesse, who was charmingly dressed, the attention of all the opera-glasses leveled upon them. Life seemed to be growing more delightful with every moment.

"You must talk to me," said Madame de Beauseant. "Stay! there is Madame de Nucingen in the third box from ours. Her sister and Monsieur de Trailles are on the other side."

As she spoke, the vicomtesse looked at the Rochefides' box, and not seeing Monsieur d'Adjuda there her face became radiant.

"She is charming," remarked Eugene, after a long look at Madame de Nucingen.

"She has white eyelashes."

"Yes, but what a beautiful slender figure!"

"She has large hands."

"But such lovely eyes!"

"Her face is too long."

"But her form is so distinguished!"

"It is fortunate for her that it is. Just look at the way she raises and lowers her opera-glass. Her Goriot blood shows in every movement," returned the vicomtesse, much to Eugene's astonishment.

In truth, Madame de Beauseant, while viewing the whole house through her glass and apparently entirely ignoring Madame de Nucingen, was yet keenly alive to her every movement and gesture. The assemblage was an exceedingly beautiful one, and Delphine de Nucingen was not

a little flattered to be the object of the exclusive attention of Madame de Beauseant's cousin, who never took his eyes off her.

"If you continue to stare at her," remarked the vicomtesse at length, "you will make people talk about you. You will never succeed, if you throw yourself at people's heads in that way."

"My dear cousin," said Eugene, "you have already done much for me. If you would finish your work, grant me one more favor, which can give you but little trouble, and which will be of inestimable benefit to me. I am in love."

"What! already?"

"Yes."

"And with that woman?"

"Would my pretensions be admitted elsewhere?" he returned, with a penetrating glance at his cousin. "Madame la Duchesse de Carigliano is a friend of Madame la Duchesse de Berry," he resumed after a pause. "You will see her, and I pray you to have the goodness to present me at her house, and to take me with you to the ball which she is to give on Monday. I shall meet Madame de Nucingen there, and I can enter upon my first skirmish."

"Willingly," she replied. "If you feel that you have already taken a fancy to her you are getting on well. There is De Marsay in the Princess Galathionne's box, and Madame de Nucingen is consequently in torture. There could not be a better moment for approaching a woman, particularly a woman who is a banker's wife; those people of the Chaussée d'Antin all love vengeance."

"What would you yourself do if you were in such a position?" he asked.

"I?" she returned proudly. "I should suffer in silence."

Just then the Marquis d'Adjuda presented himself at the door of their box.

"I have let all my affairs go to rack and ruin for the sake of coming to you," he said; "and I tell you of it in order that the sacrifice may not be wasted."

The manner in which the vicomtesse's face lighted up taught Eugene the difference between real love and its counterfeit—Parisian coquetry. He admired his cousin, and yielded his place to the Marquis d'Adjuda with a sigh.

"What a noble and sublime creature is a woman who loves thus," he thought. "And this man would betray her for a doll! How can he do it?" and he felt his heart swelling with almost childish rage. He would have liked to cast himself at Madame de Beauseant's feet, and he longed for the power of demons, to carry her away in his heart as an eagle bears aloft from the plain to his eyrie a young, white, new-born goat.

Just then the vicomtesse turned toward him to flash him a grateful glance. And the first act was finished.

"You are well enough acquainted with Madame de Nucingen to present Monsieur de Rastignac to her, are you not?" she inquired of the Marquis d'Adjuda.

"She will be most charmed to receive him," he returned.

And the handsome Portuguese rose and took the arm of the student, who found himself at once in the presence of Madame de Nucingen.

"Madame la Baronne," said the marquis, "I have the honor of presenting to you Monsieur Eugene de Rastignac, who is a cousin of the Vicomtesse de Beauseant. You have made such an impression upon him that I am delighted to complete his happiness by placing him near his idol."

This was said with that tone of raillery that softens remarks which may be too point-blank, but which, when thus veiled, are never displeasing to a woman.

Madame de Nucingen smiled, and offered Eugene the place lately occupied by her husband, who had just gone out.

"I dare not ask you to stay with me," she said, "for when one has the good fortune to be with Madame de Beauseant, one hardly cares to remain long away from her."

"But," said Eugene to her in a low voice, "I think the way in which I can best please my cousin at present is by remaining with you. Just before Monsieur le Marquis arrived," he added, raising his

voice, "we were speaking of you and of your air of distinction."

"Are you really going to stay with me?" said the baroness to Eugene, after the marquis had taken his leave. "Then we can improve the opportunity by getting acquainted. Madame de Restaud has already made me very eager to know you."

"I am rather surprised at that," he said, "for she has already closed her doors upon me."

"How?"

"Madame, I will tell you the true reason; but I claim all your indulgence in confiding such a secret to you. Your father and I are fellow-boarders. Entirely ignorant that Madame de Restaud was his daughter, I had the imprudence to make an innocent allusion to him, thereby making both your sister and her husband angry. You have no idea how disgusted Madame la Duchesse de Langeais and my cousin were at this filial apostasy. I told them about it, and they were excessively shocked at your sister's conduct. It was then, in drawing a parallel between you and her, that Madame de Beauseant spoke to me of you in such laudatory terms, and told me how kind you were to my neighbor, Monsieur Goriot. But how, indeed, could you help loving him? He adores you so passionately that I am inclined to be jealous of him already. We talked about you this very morning for as much as two hours. And so, with my mind still upon what your father had told me of you, I said to my cousin this evening, while dining with her, that it did not seem possible to me that you could be as beautiful as you were lovable. And she, wishing without doubt to increase my admiration, brought me with her to-night, saying, with her accustomed grace, that I would see you here."

"Then I was already known to you," said the banker's wife. "A little more, and we shall be old friends."

"Although friendship with you must be a delightful thing," said Rastignac, "yet I never wish to be your friend."

Remarks like these, stereotyped for the use of beginners, always have a charm for women, if accompanied by the proper accent, gesture, and look; and Madame de Nucingen at once deemed Rastignac a charming young man. But, unable to reply to his words, she took up another subject.

"Yes, my sister has behaved very badly to poor papa, who has been so good to us," she said. "Monsieur de Nucingen was obliged to give me positive orders never to see my father except in the morning, before I would yield the point; and it has made me very unhappy; you have no idea how much I have wept about it. It has been one of the greatest causes of dissension in my married life. I appear to be one of the happiest women in Paris, but I am in reality one of the most miserable. I suppose you think I am an idiot to talk to you thus; but you know my father, and therefore you can never seem like a stranger to me."

"You can never have met any one," said Eugene, "who desired more eagerly to belong to you. What do we all seek? —happiness," he murmured, in low, heartfelt tones. "Ah, well! happiness, for a woman, consists in being loved and adored, in having a friend to whom she can confide her desires, her fancies, her griefs, and her joys; to whom she can show herself as she is, with her pretty faults and beautiful qualities, without fear of meeting with lack of sympathy—believe me, you can only find this devoted and ardent heart in a young man—one full of illusions, who would die at a sign from you, who as yet knows nothing of the world, and who cares to know nothing of it, since you are all the world to him.

"I dare say you are laughing at my naïveté: I come from the depths of a province, and I purposed having nothing to do with love. I saw my cousin, and she taught me to suspect the infinite treasures of passion. I was, like Cherubin, the lover of all women, while waiting for one. And then I saw you as I came into this place to-night, and my heart went out toward you as if carried by a resistless current. I had dreamed of you so often already, you see; but I had never

imagined you as beautiful as you are in reality. Madame de Beauseant told me not to look at you so steadily, but she could not feel the attraction which your pretty red lips, your white skin, and your beautiful eyes had for me.

"Perhaps I am saying idiotic things; but do not forbid me to say them."

Nothing pleases women more than to hear such sweet words, and the severest prude will listen, even when she may not reply. After having thus broken the ice, Rastignac continued in low, tender tones, and Madame de Nucingen encouraged him by smiles, while she ever and anon glanced toward De Marsay, who had not left the box of the Princess Galathionne. Rastignac remained with her until her husband returned to take her home; and as he was leaving her, he informed her that he hoped to have the pleasure of meeting her at the ball of the Duchesse de Carigliano.

"I am getting along pretty well, for she was not much startled when I said to her, 'Will you love me?' And now that my steed is saddled and bridled, I may leap upon him and gallop away," thought Eugene, going to pay his respects to Madame de Beauseant, who was about to leave with D'Adjuda.

The poor student did not know that the baroness had been absent-minded even while he was speaking; for her thoughts had been with De Marsay all the evening; and happy in his fancied success, he accompanied the vicomtesse and her escort to the entrance where the carriages were waiting.

XI.

EUGENE returned on foot from the Italian Theater to the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, his mind busy with numerous plans. He had noticed how attentively Madame de Restaud had observed him, both in the box of the vicomtesse and in that of her sister, and he foresaw that in the future her door would be no longer closed to him; and he saw himself henceforth in the midst of the highest and most exclusive Parisian society.

One meets oftener nowadays than formerly with that relaxation of the moral sense, which is brought about gradually and almost imperceptibly, and which contrasts so painfully with the uprightness of soul that never bends to evil, and to which the least deviation from a straight line seems like a crime; uprightness which has been so magnificently illustrated in the "Alceste" of Molière, and more recently in the "Jeanie Deans" of Sir Walter Scott. But perhaps a contrasting picture, a portraiture of the winding ways into which a man's conscience may stray, in the effort to keep clear of evil, and yet remain on the border-land, may be equally dramatic, and not without its uses.

By the time he had reached his boarding-house, Rastignac's thoughts were wholly occupied with Madame de Nucingen; he recalled the grace of her figure, the dreamy sweetness of her eyes, the delicacy of her skin, beneath which he could almost see the blood as it pulsed through her veins, the enchantment of her voice, and her beautiful hair, with a fascinating rapture for which perhaps his rapid walk was in a measure accountable, bringing, as it did, every atom of blood in his body into quick motion.

He ran upstairs and knocked without ceremony at Pere Goriot's door.

"Neighbor," he said, "I have seen Madame Delphine."

"Where?" asked the eager voice of the old man.

"At the Italiens."

"Was she enjoying herself? Come in!" and Pere Goriot, who had risen from his bed at Eugene's knock, opened his door and then lay down again. "Tell me about her," he entreated.

Eugene, who now for the first time entered Pere Goriot's room, could not repress a little start of amazement at the contrast between the magnificent appearance of the daughter, and the miserable place where the father dwelt. The window was curtainless; the paper, which had been pasted upon the damp walls, was peeling off in places, rolling over and

showing the smoke-stained plaster beneath; the old man was lying upon a wretched bed, with only one thin covering over him besides a patchwork quilt, made from pieces of Madame Vauquer's old dresses. The floor was damp, and covered with dust. Opposite the window was an old rosewood chest of drawers, with a bulging front ornamented with copper handles representing vines, covered with leaves and flowers; and a shelf was placed near it, which held a basin and pitcher, and the old man's shaving utensils. In one corner were his shoes; at the head of the bed stood a little table, without a cover, and at the corner of the chimney, in which there was no sign of fire, was the square walnut-wood table, of whose crossbar Pere Goriot had availed himself on the night when Eugene had watched him through the keyhole. A miserable writing-desk, upon which the old man's hat was laid, an armchair stuffed with straw, and two smaller chairs, completed the wretched furnishing of the place. Surely, the poorest errand-boy was less badly lodged in his garret than was Pere Goriot in Madame Vauquer's house.

The whole appearance of the room was desolate and cheerless, chilling and prison-like. Fortunately, Pere Goriot did not see the expression on Eugene's face, as the latter entered the room and put down his candle on the little table beside the bed. The old man turned upon his side, the bedclothes pulled up to his chin.

"Well," he said, "which do you prefer, Madame de Restaud or Madame de Nucingen?"

"I like Madame Delphine best," replied the student, "because she loves you best."

At these words, warmly uttered, the old man stretched his arm out of bed, and pressed Eugene's hand.

"Thanks, thanks!" he said, in a tone of emotion. "Tell me what she said about me?"

And Eugene repeated with various embellishments the words of the baroness, while the old man listened as to the voice of God.

"Dear child!" he said then; "yes, she does love me. But you must not believe what she told you of Anastasie. You see, the two sisters are jealous of each other—which is only an added proof of their tenderness. Madame de Restaud loves me also. I am very sure of it; for a father is, with his children, as God is with us; he looks deep into their hearts, and judges intentions rather than deeds.

"Yes; they are both very loving. Oh! if I had only had good sons-in-law, I should have been too happy. But I suppose no happiness is complete and perfect in this world. If I could have lived with them, if only to hear their voices, to know they were there, and to watch them as they went and came, as I did when I had them at home with me, it would have made my heart leap for joy. Did they look pretty to-night?" he asked, after a minute's pause.

"Exceedingly pretty," replied Eugene. "But, Monsieur Goriot, how does it happen that, with daughters as rich as yours, you are living in such a hole of a place?"

"Oh!" returned the other, with assumed carelessness, "what do I want of anything better than this? I can't very well explain it to you, for I cannot express myself properly. It is all there," he added, putting his hand upon his heart. "My whole life is wrapped up in my two daughters. If they enjoy themselves and are happy, if they are handsomely dressed, and walk upon soft carpets, what does it matter what kind of cloth I wear, or where I sleep? I am not cold if they are warm; I am always happy if they are pleased. Their sorrows are the only ones I have. When you are a father, when you say to yourself as you look upon your children: 'They are a part of me,' you will feel as if in reality they and you were one. You will feel their voice through your whole being, and a sad look from their eyes will thrill your very heart. Some day you will understand that a father is much happier in his children's happiness than in his own. I cannot explain it to you, but I know that it is so. Instead of living one life, I live three.

"Shall I tell you something very odd?" he continued. "Well, since I have been a father, I have been able to understand

God; he is everywhere, since all creation is a part of him. It is just so with me and my daughters. Only, it must be that I love them better than God loves the world, since the world is not as beautiful as God, while my daughters are much more beautiful than I am.

"Why, if any man would make my little Delphine as happy as a woman ought to be who is dearly loved, I would black his boots, and be his very slave. I have learned from her maid that this De Marsay is nothing but a cur, and I have longed to wring his neck. The idea of not loving a perfect woman like her, with the voice of a nightingale and the figure of a model! Where could her eyes have been when she married that great fat Alsatian? They ought both to have nice, amiable, handsome young gentlemen. Ah, well! they had their own choice."

As Pere Goriot spoke thus, he was sublime. Eugene had never before seen him illumined by the fires of his paternal passion, and his whole being seemed transfigured by their power.

"Well," said Eugene, "perhaps you will not be sorry to hear in all probability she will not have much more to do with De Marsay, for he seems to have transferred his affections to the Princess Galathionne. As for me, I fell in love with Madame Delphine this evening myself."

"You?" said Pere Goriot.

"Yes; and I did not appear to be very disagreeable to her, either. We talked of love for more than an hour, and I am going to see her again very soon."

"Oh! how I should love you, my dear sir, if you pleased her!" cried the old man. "You are good; you would not torment me. But if you were false to her, I would cut your throat. Bah!" he added, suddenly, "I am talking nonsense. It is too cold for you here. Did she give you any message for me?"

"None," said Eugene to himself. Aloud, he replied: "She told me to tell you that she sent you a daughter's loving kiss."

"Good-night, neighbor," returned the old man; "may you sleep well and have happy dreams. My dreams are all comprised in her dear message. May God protect you in all your desires! You have been like a good angel to me tonight; for you have brought me news of my daughter."

"Poor man," thought Eugene, as he prepared for bed; "it is enough to touch a heart of marble. Her thoughts were no more of him than they were of the Grand Turk."

After this conversation Pere Goriot looked upon his neighbor as a confidant and a friend. They were drawn together by the single bond which could have had any influence over the old man; and his passionate love for his daughter made him wise enough to foresee that if Eugene were to become dear to her it would bring him a little nearer to her himself; he would be better tolerated, for the young man's sake.

He had hinted to Eugene one of his greatest griefs. Madame de Nucingen, for whose happiness he would have died a thousand deaths, had never known the sweetness of love. Eugene was, to use the old man's own expression, "one of the prettiest young men he had ever seen," and he seemed to feel instinctively that his daughter would learn, by means of the young student, to know all the happiness of which she had hitherto been ignorant. And he therefore conceived for his neighbor an attachment which grew daily stronger, and without which it would have been impossible to know the dénouement of this history.

The next morning, at breakfast, the affectionate looks which Pere Goriot cast upon Eugene, beside whom he sat, the few words which he said to him, and the change in the expression of his countenance, which was ordinarily like a plaster-mask, surprised all the other boarders. Vautrin, who now saw the young student for the first time since their conversation of the previous morning, looked at him as if he would read his very soul; and remembering the man's proposals, Eugene, who had during the night thought over all the opportunities which appeared to be opening to his view, and among them had

let his imagination stray toward Mademoiselle Taillefer's dowry, could not help looking at Victorine as even the most virtuous of young men looks at a rich heiress. By chance their eyes met. The poor girl could not help thinking Eugene charming in his new clothes, and the glance which they exchanged was sufficiently significant to show Rastignac that he was the object of her thoughts, at least, if not of her affections. And a voice within him cried :

"Eight hundred thousand francs!"

But he put the idea hastily from him, as the events of the previous evening came to his mind, and with them the thought that his passion for Madame de Nucingen would be the best of antidotes for Vautrin's unholy schemes.

"They gave last night at the Italiens Rossini's 'Barbier de Seville,'" he said aloud, "I never heard such delicious music. Oh! how delightful it must be to have a box there."

Pere Goriot, while Eugene was speaking, caught each word of his remark as a dog would seize upon the slightest movement of his master.

"How did you come home?" asked Vautrin.

"On foot," replied Eugene.

"For my part," returned the tempter, "I am not fond of half-pleasures; I should prefer to go in my own carriage, to my own box, and return as comfortably as I went. All or nothing! That is my motto."

"And a good one," remarked Madame Vauquer.

"You will perhaps see Madame de Nucingen this morning," said Eugene, in a low tone to Pere Goriot. "She will be sure to receive you with open arms, for she will be anxious to ask you a thousand questions about me. I am told that she would do anything in the world to be received by my cousin, the Viscomtesse de Beauseant. Now, do not forget to tell her that I love her too well not to procure that happiness for her."

Rastignac set off without delay for the law-school, in order not to remain any longer than was necessary in his distasteful boarding-house. He strolled about, nearly all day, lost in hopeful reverie. He was reflecting upon Vautrin's reasonings, and upon social life in general, when he met his friend Bianchon in the garden of the Luxembourg.

"What in the world makes you look so solemn?" asked the young man as he took his arm and they walked toward the palace.

"I am tormented with wicked thoughts," returned Eugene, gloomily.

"What kind? They can easily be cured."

"How?"

"By yielding to them."

"You laugh, without knowing what you are talking about. Did you ever read Rousseau?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember the place where he asks his reader what he would do, if, by a single act of his will, and without stirring from Paris, he could make himself rich by killing an old mandarin in China?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Pshaw! I should be on my thirty-third mandarin by this time!"

"No, don't joke. If the thing were really proved to you to be possible, if it only needed a nod from you, would you do it?"

"Is the mandarin old? But there; young or old, paralytic or well, what difference would it make? No, of course I wouldn't."

"Bianchon, you are a good fellow. But, suppose now that you loved a beautiful woman to distraction, and wanted plenty of money to give her?"

"You take away my senses, and then expect me to argue!"

"Come; I have been talking nonsense. Now listen. I have two sisters who are angels of beauty and goodness, and I long to make them happy. Where shall I get two hundred thousand francs to give them for a dowry, say, five years from now? There are, you see, circumstances in life where one must play a bold game, and not spend his life in gathering sous."

"Now you are wrestling with a prob-

lem which everybody meets at the entrance of life, and you want to cut the Gordian knot with a sword. To do that, my dear sir, you must be an Alexander. For my part, I am happy in the thoughts of the insignificant existence which I expect to lead in the country by and by, following the footsteps of my father, and succeeding him eventually, as a stupid matter of course. A man's affections are as well satisfied in the smallest circle as in a large circumference; Napoleon himself could not dine more than once a day. Our happiness, take my word for it, will always be held between the soles of our feet and the crown of our head; and whether it costs a million a year or a hundred louis, the result is the same. Therefore, I conclude in favor of the mandarin's life."

"Many thanks, Bianchon!" exclaimed Eugene. "You have done me good. I hope we shall always be friends."

"See here," observed the medical student, as they turned toward the Jardin des Plantes; "I saw Mademoiselle Michonneau and Poiret just now, sitting on a bench and talking with a gentleman whom I used to see in the disturbances of last year in the neighborhood of the Chamber of Deputies, and who, unless I am very much mistaken, is a policeman disguised in citizen's clothes. That couple will bear studying. I will tell you why some time. I must be off to my class now," and he went away at a brisk pace.

When Eugene returned to his boarding-place, he found Pere Goriot waiting for him.

"See!" cried the old man; "here is a letter from her. Such pretty writing!"

Eugene tore open the seal, and read as follows:

"MONSIEUR, my father has told me that you are very fond of Italian music, and I would be very happy if you would do me the favor to accept a place in my box. On Saturday, we shall have Fodor and Pellegrini, and I am sure that you will not refuse me. Monsieur de Nucingen joins with me in begging you to come and dine with us, informally, on that evening. If you accept, you will delight him by relieving him of his conjugal duty of escort. Do not answer, but come. D. de N."

"Show it to me," said Pere Goriot, entreatingly, when Eugene had finished reading the letter. "You will go, will you not?" he added, smelling of the paper. "Ah! how nice it is! And her fingers have touched it."

"A woman does not throw herself at a man's head like that," Eugene said to himself. "She wants to use me as a tool to bring back De Marsay. It is spite which makes her do this."

"Well," said Pere Goriot, "what are you thinking about?"

Eugene did not thoroughly understand the motives of vanity which govern so many women, and did not realize that, to gain admittance to the Faubourg St. Germain, the banker's wife was capable of any sacrifice. At this time it began to be the fashion to consider those ladies who were admitted to the society of the Faubourg St. Germain as a little above all the rest of the world. Among them, Madame de Beauseant, her friend, the Duchesse de Langeais, and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse stood in the first rank, and Rastignac was probably the only person who was ignorant of the burning desire among the ladies of the Chaussée d'Antin to enter that constellation where shone the superior stars of their sex. But his suspicions did him good service, for they gave him coolness, and the power of imposing conditions in lieu of receiving them.

"Yes, I shall go," he replied at last.

And therefore curiosity drew him to Madame de Nucingen's house, in place of the passion which might have influenced him if she had been distant and disdainful. Nevertheless, it was not without impatience that he awaited the next day and the hour of departure, and he made his toilet with secret feelings of pleasure and vanity which he would not have confessed for the world. He arranged his hair with the thought that a pretty woman's glances would rest upon his dark curls, and looked complacently at his tall slender figure,

as he unfolded his coat, saying to himself:

"There is no doubt about it; there might be a good many worse ones!"

Then he went downstairs just as the household were assembled at table, and received gayly the exclamations and remarks which an elaborate toilet is always sure to call forth in a second-rate Parisian boarding-house, where every one feels at liberty to criticise or admire a new dress or coat.

In the midst of the laughter and joking Eugene caught a furtive glance from Mademoiselle Taillefer, as she leaned toward Madame Couture and said a few words in her ear.

"There is the cabriolet," announced Sylvia.

"Where is he going to dine?" asked Bianchon.

"At the house of Madame la Baroness de Nucingen, the daughter of Pere Goriot," replied the student; and at this name all glances were turned toward the old man, whose eyes were following Eugene with a look of envy.

XII.

When he reached the Rue Saint Lazare, Eugene found himself in one of those fancifully built houses with slender pillars and small porticoes which are so much admired in Paris; a true banker's house, full of costly trifles of stucco, and of staircase landings in marble mosaic. Madame de Nucingen was in a little room hung with Italian paintings, the decoration of which reminded one of a café. The baroness appeared to be sad and out of spirits, which rather piqued Eugene's self-love; for he had come expecting to find her made happy by the mere fact of his presence, and here she was, seemingly in despair.

"I have little right to your confidence, madame," he said, after having rallied her upon her preoccupation; "but if my presence bore you, you must frankly tell me so."

"Do not go away," she said, "I shall be alone if you do. My husband is to dine in the city, and I do not want to be left alone. I want to be amused."

"What is the matter with you?" he asked.

"You would be the last person to whom I could answer that question," she exclaimed.

"I want to know," he returned. "Perhaps the secret has something to do with me."

"Perhaps!" she replied. "But no! family quarrels should be buried in the depths of one's heart. Have I not already told you? I am not happy; gilded chains are the heaviest of all."

Now, when a woman tells a young man that she is unhappy, if this same young man is properly sympathizing, and if he has fifteen hundred francs to spare in his pocket, he will undoubtedly say just what Eugene said, and think what he thought.

"What more can you desire?" he replied. "You are beautiful, young, beloved, and rich."

"Don't let us speak of me," she said, with a perverse gesture of the head. "We are going to dine together tête-à-tête, and are going to hear some delicious music afterward. Does my appearance please you?" she continued, rising coquettishly, and showing her rich white cashmere dress embroidered in Persian designs.

"Everything about you pleases me," returned Eugene. "You are charming."

Suddenly her mood changed, and she said, smiling bitterly:

"You know very little about me. Nothing here betrays unhappiness to you, and yet, in spite of appearances, I am in despair. My sorrows prevent me from sleeping, and I am rapidly becoming old and ugly."

"Oh, that would be impossible," said the student. "But I confess I am curious to know what troubles a devoted love cannot overcome."

"Ah! if I were to confide in you, you would flee from me," she said. "You do not love me, except with the gallantry which is fashionable among so many men;

MADAME VAUQUER.

"Her personality explained the boarding-house, just as the latter implied the former."

but if you really loved me, you would be lost in despair. You see that I ought to be silent. In pity," she added, "let us talk of something else. Come and see my rooms."

"No, let us stay here," said Eugene, seating himself before the fire near Madame de Nucingen, and boldly taking her hand.

She let him take it, and pressed his with one of those sudden movements of concentrated energy which betray strong emotion.

"Listen to me," said Rastignac. "If you have sorrows, you must confide them to me. I want to prove to you that I love you for yourself. Either you will speak and tell me your troubles in order to let me help you out of them, if I have to kill six men to do it, or I will go away now, never to return."

"Well!" she cried, pressing her hand to her forehead with a gesture of despair, "I will put you to the test this very moment. Yes," she said, as if to herself, "there is no other way."

She rang the bell.

"Is your master's carriage ready?" she asked of the valet-de-chambre.

"Yes, madame."

"I am going to take it. You can let him have mine and my horses. You need not have dinner served until seven o'clock."

"Come now!" she said to Eugene; and he thought himself dreaming as he found himself in Monsieur de Nucingen's coupé beside this woman.

"To the Palais Royal," she said to the coachman, "near the Theatre Français."

On the way she appeared agitated; she refused to reply to Eugene's numberless questions, and sat beside him silent and motionless.

When the carriage stopped, the baroness looked at her companion with an air which checked the protestations upon his lips.

"Do you indeed love me?" she said.

"Yes," he replied, concealing the uneasiness which her manner caused him.

"You will not think evil of me, no matter what I may ask of you?"

"No."

"Are you prepared to obey me?"

"Blindly."

"Have you ever gambled?" she asked, in a trembling voice.

"Never."

"Ah! I am so glad. You will be lucky. Here is my purse," she said. "Take it! there are a hundred francs in it; all that I, happy woman that I am, possess. Go up with it into some gambling-place; I don't know where they are, but I know that there are some at the Palais Royal. Risk these hundred francs at a game called roulette, and either lose them all, or bring me back six thousand francs. When you return I will tell you my troubles."

"May the devil take me if I know what to do," he murmured, "but I will obey;" and his heart beat with secret joy as he thought, "She has implicated herself with me by this, and henceforth she can refuse me nothing."

Eugene took the little purse, and after inquiring the way to the nearest gambling-house, wended his way rapidly thither. He entered and gave up his hat, and then asked for roulette, whereupon he was conducted to a long table; and, followed by all the spectators, he boldly asked where he should put the stakes.

"If you put a louis on any one of these thirty-six numbers, and it goes, you will have thirty-six louis," replied a respectable-looking old man with white hair.

Eugene threw the hundred francs on the number representing his own age, twenty-one. A cry of astonishment arose, before he had time to see anything. He had won without knowing it.

"Take up your money," said the old man. "You will not win twice at that system."

Eugene took a rake that was handed to him, drew the three thousand six hundred francs to him, and, still without knowing anything about the game, placed them upon the red; and all the spectators looked enviously at him as they saw him about to venture once more.

The wheel turned: he had won again! and the banker once more threw him thirty-six hundred francs.

"You have seven thousand two hundred francs," said the old man in his ear; "and if you will take my advice, you will stop now, before you lose them; red is not likely to win again. If you are charitable, show your gratitude for this great good fortune by relieving the miseries of one of Napoleon's prefects who is in the greatest need."

Rastignac, half stunned by his good fortune, and not yet understanding anything of the mysterious game by which he had won it, allowed the old, gray-headed man to take ten louis from him, and went away with the seven thousand francs.

"Well, where will you take me now?" he asked, showing the money to Madame de Nucingen as soon as the carriage door was shut.

Delphine pressed him in a quick embrace, and kissed him swiftly, but without passion. "You have saved me!" she cried; and tears of joy streamed from her eyes.

"Now I will tell you everything, my friend," she said, "for you will be my friend, will you not? You see me rich and apparently wanting for nothing. But you must know that Monsieur de Nucingen does not give me the management of a single sou. He pays for everything about the house—for my carriages and my opera-boxes; he allows me for my dress a sum which is entirely insufficient, and reduces me to secret misery by his close calculations.

"I am too proud to implore him for money. Fancy me, worth seven hundred thousand francs, and yet having nothing. How did it come about? In the first place, through pride and indignation. We are so young, so naïve, when we first enter upon conjugal life! When I needed to ask money of my husband, the words stuck in my throat. I dared not speak, and I got along as best I could, with economy and with what my poor father could give me.

"At last I got into debt; and when I had to tell him that I owed money for jewels and for all kinds of fancies to which our poor father had always accustomed us, I suffered martyrdom; but at last I mustered courage, for had I not brought him a fortune of my own?

"Nucingen was beside himself with rage; he vowed that I would ruin him, and stormed until I wished myself a hundred feet under ground. As he had taken my dowry he could do no less than pay my debts; but he stipulated that henceforth I should limit my expenses to a certain sum, and I agreed for the sake of peace.

"Since then," she continued, "I have been deceived in some one to whom I had imputed a nobility of character of which he proved himself unworthy. You know whom I mean. One ought never to abandon a woman to whom one has, in a time of distress, thrown a heap of gold; one ought to love her always. You, with your youth and purity, are wondering, I suppose, how a woman can accept money from a man; but is it not the most natural thing in the world to share everything with the being who makes us happy? When one has given everything, what does a part matter? Money becomes of value only when love has flown.

"You do not know how I suffered today when Nucingen positively refused to give me six thousand francs, a sum which he spends every month on his own pleasures! I was ready to kill myself; and the most insane ideas flitted through my brain. There were moments when I actually envied the lot of my own chambermaid. It was of no use to go to my father; Anastasie and I had drained him dry, and he could not have helped me, although he would have been willing to sell his own soul and body if they had been worth six thousand francs. I would only have made him wretched, and to no avail. You have saved me from shame and death; I was crazed with misery. Now you know the life of half the women of Paris: luxury without, but cruel care within. And yet there are poor creatures still more unhappy than I. At all events, after this evening I shall be free from obligations to De Marsay;" and she hid her face in her hands to conceal her tears from Eugene, who gently drew her fingers away again, in order to look at her.

"Is it not horrible to mingle money and sentiment in this way?" she said. "You cannot love me after this."

This mixture of good feeling and faults rather bewildered Eugene, who strove to soothe her with sweet and consoling words, while he admired the beautiful woman, so child-like and imprudent in her grief.

"Promise me," she said, "that you will not arm yourself against me with the knowledge of me that you have gained to-night."

"Ah, madame, I am incapable of it," he returned.

She took his hand and laid it upon her heart with a gesture full of grace and gentleness.

"Thanks to you, I am free and light-hearted once more," she said. "Before, I lived as though under the weight of an iron hand. Henceforth I will live simply, spending nothing. You will approve of me then, will you not, my friend? Keep this," she added, taking only six bank-bills. "In reality I owe you a thousand francs, for I ought to share with you."

Eugene protested against this with all his might; but when the baroness said, "I shall look upon you as my enemy if you are not my accomplice," he took the money.

"It will do for a nest-egg in case of misfortune," he said.

"That is what I feared," she cried, growing pale. "If you wish me to be anything at all to you, swear to me never to resort to gaming again. Oh! if I were to be the means of corrupting you, I should never forgive myself!"

Just then they reached her home, and the contrast between such opulence and the misery which he had just witnessed, fairly stunned the student, in whose ears the sinister words of Vautrin still echoed.

"Sit there," said the baroness, entering her own apartment, and indicating a chair near the fire. "I am going to write a very difficult letter, and I want your advice."

"Do not write at all," said Eugene. "Simply wrap up the notes, direct the package, and send it by your maid."

"What a dear man you are!" she exclaimed. "See now what a thing it is to come of a good family! The De Beauseant spoke there," she added, with a smile.

"She is perfectly charming," thought Eugene, admiring her more and more each minute. He looked around at the luxurious elegance of the apartment. "Does my room please you?" asked the baroness, ringing for her maid.

"Therese," she said, when the woman appeared, "carry this yourself to Monsieur de Marsay, and give it into his own hand. If you do not find him, bring it back to me."

Therese took the package and left the room, casting a malicious glance at Eugene as she went. Dinner was immediately announced, and Rastignac gave his arm to Madame de Nucingen, who led him into a beautiful dining-room where he saw the same luxury and abundance which he had remarked at his cousin's table.

"On the nights of Italian opera," she said, "you will dine with me, and be my escort afterward."

"I would like only too well to accustom myself to this sort of life," he said, "but I am only a poor student, and have my fortune yet to make."

"You will make it," she said, brightly. "You see how everything turns out well; I did not expect ever to be so happy again."

When they entered their box at the opera, Madame de Nucingen wore an air of happiness which made her so beautiful that every one felt at liberty to make unkind and envious remarks at her expense. But she knew nothing of it; Eugene held her hand, and they communicated their enjoyment of the music by pressures of the two palms, more eloquent than words. For them, the evening was one long, intoxicating delight.

They went out together, and Madame de Nucingen insisted upon taking Eugene as far as the Pont Neuf, disputing with him, all the way, one of those kisses

which she had so freely lavished upon him at the Palais Royal.

Eugene reproached her with her inconsistency, but she replied:

"Then, it was gratitude for an unhoped-for deliverance; now, it would be a promise."

"And you refuse to make me any, ungrateful one that you are!" he said, growing angry.

With a fascinating gesture of impatience she gave him her hand to kiss, which he did with a bad grace perfectly enchanting to her.

"Adieu until Monday, at the ball," she said.

When he found himself on foot, in the clear moonlight, Eugene gave himself up to serious reflection. He was at once happy and discontented; happy at an adventure which would probably eventually link him with one of the most beautiful women in all Paris, and discontented at seeing all his dreams of advancement and fortune by means of the banker overturned. It was then for the first time that he realized the tangibility of the indecisive thoughts in which he had indulged on the previous night. Failure always shows us the strength of our hopes. The deeper Eugene plunged into Parisian life, the more unwilling he became to remain poor and obscure; and he crumpled up the bill for a thousand francs in his pocket, trying to think of a hundred reasons for appropriating it.

At last he reached the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, and at the top of the staircase he saw a light. Pere Goriot had left his door open, and his candle lighted, in order to make sure that the student did not forget to come and tell him about his daughter.

Eugene concealed nothing from him.

"But," cried Pere Goriot, with a sort of despairing jealousy, "they think me ruined, and I have still three thousand francs of income. Oh, the poor little child! Why did she not come to me? I would have sold my income; we could have used some of the capital, and with the rest I would have bought an annuity. Why did you not come and state the case to me, my good neighbor? How did you ever dare to risk at play that pitiful little hundred francs? It is enough to break one's heart. And that is what sons-in-law are like! Oh! if I could only get hold of them, I would wring their necks! And you say she wept?"

"With her head upon my waistcoat," said Eugene.

"Oh! give it to me," entreated Pere Goriot. "It has my daughter's tears upon it; my dear Delphine, who never wept when she was a little child. Oh, I will buy you another, but do not take this away; leave it with me, I beg of you. She ought, according to her marriage contract, to have the benefit of her own fortune. I shall go and find Derville, a lawyer, to-morrow. I will have things properly settled. I know all about the law. I am an old wolf, and I have found my teeth again."

"Here, father," said Eugene, "here are a thousand francs which she insisted upon giving me out of our winnings. Keep them for her, in the waistcoat."

Goriot looked at Eugene, and then grasped his hand, upon which he let fall a tear.

"You will succeed in life," said the old man to him. "God is just. I am an honest man, and I tell you that there are few men like you. Will you also be my dear child? Go now, and sleep well. You can sleep, for you are not a father. She was weeping, and I was quietly eating while she suffered. I, who would give my very soul to spare either of them a tear!"

"Upon my word," said Eugene, as he got into bed, "I think I shall be an honest man all my life. There is really great pleasure in following the dictates of one's conscience!"

XIII.

On the following evening when it was time to go to the ball Eugene presented himself at Madame de Beauseant's, and she took him with her to the Duch-

esse de Carigliano, who received him most graciously.

Madame de Nucingen was there, beautifully dressed and evidently waiting impatiently for Eugene's arrival and admiration. During the evening he gained a better idea of his social position, and realized that as the recognized relative of Madame de Beauseant, he had a place and a certain power of his own. Then, too, his conquest of Madame de Nucingen, which had begun to be openly whispered, made him the object of envy and admiration among the young men. As he passed from room to room, and from group to group, he heard everywhere remarks upon his good fortune, and predictions of his success, and Delphine, evidently fearing to lose him, no longer refused him the kiss for which he had pleaded at their last meeting, but promised to grant it to him that evening. During the ball, he received invitations to some of the best houses in Paris, and altogether the event was like a brilliant social *début* for him, and one to which he would look back all through his life, as a young girl remembers the conquests of her first ball.

The next morning when he was describing the affair to Pere Goriot at breakfast, Vautrin listened with an evil smile.

"And do you think," he said, "that a fashionable young man can live in the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, and in the Maison Vauquer? A nice, respectable place enough, without doubt, but not in the least aristocratic. It is luxurious, and beautiful in its abundance, and proud to have been, if only for a time, the home of a Rastignac; but when all is said, it must be acknowledged that it is still only the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve.

"My young friend," continued Vautrin, with a mock-paternal air, "if you want to make a figure in Paris, you must have three horses, a tilbury for the mornings, a coupé for evening; a stable equipment which will amount to nine thousand francs. Then, you would be unworthy of your destiny if you did not spend at least three thousand francs on your tailor, six hundred francs on your perfumer, a hundred ecus on your shoemaker, and a hundred on your hatter. As for your washer-woman, she ought to cost you a thousand francs, for fashionable young men are obliged to be immaculate in their linen. It is their most conspicuous article of dress; love and the church insist upon spotless linen.

"That makes forty thousand francs, to say nothing of what you will lose at play and in presents. It is impossible to reckon upon less than two thousand francs of pocket-money. I have led that sort of life, and I know all about it. By the way, I have forgotten all about the valet and the groom! Would you have Christopher carry your love-letters? Would you write them on the paper which you ordinarily use? You might as well commit suicide at once. No," he added, in the deepest tones of his bass voice, "take the advice of an experienced old man, and either marry an heiress, or take another tack!" and Vautrin winked slyly toward Victorine as he spoke, as much as to say:

"Remember what I said to you out in the garden, and do not be such a fool as not to profit by my advice."

Several days passed, during which Rastignac led a most dissipated life; he dined nearly every day with Madame de Nucingen, accompanying her afterward to ball or theater; he returned at three or four o'clock in the morning, rose at midday, and went to walk with Delphine if it was fine, wasting thus his time without knowing its value, and breathing in all the attractions and seductions of luxury with ever-increasing ardor. He gambled heavily, sometimes winning and sometimes losing, and gradually became thoroughly familiar with the extravagant life of a Parisian young man.

Out of his first winnings he had sent fifteen hundred francs to his mother and sisters, together with several beautiful presents. Although he had announced his intention of leaving the Maison Vauquer, the last days of January came, and found him still there.

The reason for this apparent inconsistency lay in a peculiarity to which young men seem to be subject; however much money they may have for luxuries and trifles, they never have any on hand for the every-day needs of life. And although, to raise funds to pay his gambling-debts, Eugene had more than once resorted to the Mont de Piété, that sad and discreet friend to youth, he seemed to lack both invention and audacity when it was a question of paying for his board and lodging, and for those necessaries of life which were indispensable to his career. He could not find another boarding-place without paying for a month in advance, and buying furniture for his new establishment; and as a natural consequence he remained in his present distasteful abode.

About this time he had come to the end of his money and was in debt, and he began to understand that it was an impossibility to carry on his present existence without fixed resources. But while deploring the evils of his situation, he could not make up his mind to renounce the joys of his new mode of life, and was determined to continue it at all hazards.

"Well, have we killed our mandarin yet?" asked Bianchon one day as he was leaving the table.

"Not yet," returned Eugene, "but he is dying."

Although the medical student took this reply for a joke, it was far from being one. Eugene, who for the first time in many days had dined at his boarding-place, had been silent and thoughtful during the meal, and instead of leaving at dessert, he remained at the table, seated near Mademoiselle Taillefer, at whom he looked expressively from time to time. Several boarders were still at the table eating their nuts, and others were walking about the room, continuing discussions begun during the dinner. As usual, each one followed his own fancy, going or staying as he pleased. In winter the dining-room was rarely entirely abandoned before eight o'clock, at which hour the four ladies were left alone, to revenge themselves for the constraint laid upon their tongues by the masculine presence.

Struck by Eugene's preoccupation, Vautrin, although he had at first appeared in haste to go, lingered in the dining-room, where he could observe the young man without being perceived by him; and when the last of the men had left the room, he stationed himself slyly in the drawing-room beyond. He had been attentively reading the student's mind, and detected decisive symptoms.

In truth, Rastignac found himself in a perplexing situation. Although he had established himself on familiar terms with Madame de Nucingen, although she had acknowledged his attentions by appearing constantly with him in public, he yet felt that she was holding him at arm's-length, and that, in reality, he knew her no better now than on the first day of their acquaintance. It seemed to him like a defeat, and he was in no humor to be conquered in his first combat; he realized the disadvantages which his lack of ready money gave him, and sometimes, seeing himself without a sou and without a future, he allowed his thoughts to linger, in spite of the voice of conscience, upon the chance of fortune which Vautrin had suggested to him, as the result of a marriage with Mademoiselle Taillefer. And to-night his affairs presented such a desperate outlook that he almost involuntarily yielded to the artifices of his terrible tempter.

As Poiret and Mademoiselle Michonneau left the room, Eugene, supposing that Madame Vauquer and Madame Couture, who were knitting, more than half asleep, by the stove, were the only ones near himself and Mademoiselle Taillefer, turned and looked at the young girl so tenderly that she involuntarily lowered her eyes.

"Are you in trouble, Monsieur Eugene?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"What man does not have his troubles?" replied Rastignac. "But if we men were sure of being loved with a devotion which would recompense us for

any sacrifices. our sorrows would disappear."

Mademoiselle Taillefer cast upon him, in response, a look whose meaning was unmistakable.

"You believe yourself to be sure of your own heart and feelings to-day, mademoiselle," he said, "but can you answer for it that you would never change?"

For all answer, a smile came to the lips of the young girl, like a ray of light darting from her soul, which so illumined her face that Eugene was almost frightened at having aroused such emotion.

"What!" he said hastily, "if to-morrow you were to find yourself rich and happy, if an immense fortune were to fall to you from the clouds, would you still love the poor young man who had been dear to you in your days of poverty?"

She made a pretty little affirmative sign of her head.

"A very poor and unfortunate young man?"

Another affirmative sign.

"What nonsense are you talking there?" cried Madame Vauquer.

"Let us alone," replied Eugene, "we understand each other."

"Then we are to infer that there is a promise of marriage between Monsieur Eugene de Rastignac and Mademoiselle Victorine Taillefer?" asked Vautrin in his loud voice, showing himself suddenly at the dining-room door.

"Oh! how you frightened me!" screamed Madame Couture and Madame Vauquer both at once.

"I might have made a worse choice," returned Eugene, laughing; although the voice of Vautrin caused him intolerable agony.

"No joking, gentlemen, if you please!" said Madame Couture. "Victorine, my dear, let us go upstairs."

They left the room, Madame Vauquer following them in order to economize fire and candles by passing the evening with them; and Eugene found himself alone with Vautrin.

"I knew you would come to it," said the latter, with imperturbable coolness. "But listen! I have my own feelings of delicacy, as well as you, and I beg of you not to make your decision at this moment. You are not in your ordinary situation; you are in debt, and I prefer that you should yield to my arguments because of their own force, rather than through passion or despair. Perhaps you are in need of a thousand francs or so. Here! will you have them?" and he drew a portemonnaie from his pocket, and took from it three bank-bills which he fluttered before the student's eyes.

Eugene was in a cruel position. He owed the Marquis d'Adjuda and the Count de Trailles a hundred louis lost at play. He did not have them, and dared not go without them to Madame de Restaud's, where he was expected. It was an informal gathering, with cakes and tea for refreshments, and the chance of losing six thousand francs at whist for entertainment.

"Sir," said Eugene, concealing with difficulty a convulsive tremor, "after what has passed between us, you must know that I cannot consent to be under obligations to you."

"Ah, well!" replied his tempter: "I knew you would feel so at first. You are a fine young man, proud as a lion and gentle as a girl. But when you have thought it over a little more, you will see that my way is best. A little resistance at first does no harm, and your conscience feels all the better satisfied for it. But in a few days you will come to my way of thinking. Oh, if you would only become my pupil, I would answer for your future advancement. You should not form a wish that would not be instantly gratified, no matter what it was. You would lead an ideal existence. Everything which was an obstacle to you would be leveled to the ground. Do you think I am a rascal? I tell you, that a man who was as upright as you believe yourself now—Monsieur de Turenne—used to make his own little arrangements with brigands, without considering himself compromised, either.

"So you do not want to be under obligations to me, eh? Well, let this have

nothing to do with the other matter," continued Vautrin, smiling. "Take these bits of paper, and write here," he added, drawing a stamped bill from his pocket. "'Accepted for the sum of three thousand five hundred francs, payable in one year,' and date it.

"The interest, you see, is exorbitant enough to take away all your scruples; you can look upon me as a Jew, if you like, and consider yourself as under no obligation at all. I permit you to despise me to-day, sure that you will like me later. You will find in me one of those immense abysses which fools call vice; but you will never find me either a coward or an ingrate."

"What manner of man are you?" cried Eugene; "I believe you were created to torment me."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I am a man who is willing to soil myself for the sake of pulling you safely out of the mud for the rest of your days. Do you ask my reason for this devotion? I will whisper it to you, some day. I terrified you a little at first by showing you too suddenly the noise and play of the social machinery; but your first fright will pass away like that of a conscript on the field of battle, and you will accustom yourself to the idea of looking upon men as so many soldiers, destined to perish in the service of those who are kings over them. Times are changed; formerly, men used to say, 'Here, go and kill that man for me, and I will give you a hundred francs.' But now, I propose to give you a fine fortune, merely for a sign of the head which will not compromise you in the least, and yet you hesitate. The race is degenerating!"

Eugene, without replying, signed the agreement, and exchanged it for the bank-bills.

"Here, now!" said Vautrin. "Let us talk sensibly. I want to leave for America in a few months, to plant my tobacco. I will send you some cigars from it. If I get rich, I will help you. If I do not have any children—and it is extremely unlikely that I shall have—I will make you my heir. That is what it is to be the friend of a man. I have taken a great fancy to you, and I have a passion for devoting myself to others. You see, my young friend, I live in a more exalted sphere than most men; I consider actions as only means to an end. What is a man's life worth to me? Not that!" and he snapped his fingers carelessly.

"A man is everthing or nothing," he continued. "He is less than nothing when he is like Poiret; but he is a god when he resembles you; he is no more a mere machine covered with skin, but a theater for the finest sentiments. Look at Pere Goriot, now; his two daughters are all the universe to him; they are the thread by which he guides himself through the labyrinth of creation. For me, on the contrary, there exists only one real sentiment; friendship of man for man. I have compromised myself more than once for the sake of a comrade. I would not say this to every one, but I know that you are discreet, and that I can say what I like to you. You will not linger a great while in the swamps where the dwarfs live who surround us now. Take my word for it, you will get married;" and Vautrin went away without listening to the denial of the young student.

"Let him do what he will, I will never marry Mademoiselle Taillefer," thought Eugene.

With a shudder at the idea of entering into a compact with this man who repelled and yet fascinated him, Eugene dressed himself, called a carriage, and went to Madame de Restaud's. For several days that lady had been extremely gracious and attentive to the young man, who was so evidently a social success, and whose power in the world of fashion was so rapidly growing. He met there Messieurs de Trailles and d'Adjuda, paid them what he owed them, played whist a part of the night, and regained what he had lost; and, superstitious like most men who have their own way to make, and who are more or less of fatalists, he looked upon his good as the reward of Heaven for his perseverance in refusing to enter the paths of evil. The next morning he eagerly asked Vautrin if he still had his prom-

issory note, and, receiving an affirmative answer, he handed him the three thousand francs.

"Everything is going well," said Vautrin to him.

"But I am not your accomplice," returned Eugene.

"I know it, I know it," replied Vautrin, interrupting him; "you are still playing off a little, but you will come around all right."

XIV.

POIRET and Mademoiselle Michonneau, two days later, were sitting on a bench, in the sun, in one of the least-frequented alleys of the Jardin des Plantes, talking with the man who had been suspected by the medical student.

"Mademoiselle," said Monsieur Goudureau, "I really do not see where you get your scruples. His excellency, the minister of the general police of the kingdom—"

"Ah! his excellency, the minister of the general police of the kingdom—" repeated Poiret.

"Yes, his excellency, is interested in this affair," said Goudureau.

Now Monsieur Poiret, as ex-employé of the Government, belonged to that class of individuals, one of whose most prominent traits is a sort of respect, involuntary, mechanical and instinctive, for this grand lama of all the ministry, the man who is known to his employés by an illegible signature, and by the name of "his excellency, the minister," words which are equivalent to the "*Il Bondo Cani*" of the Caliph of Bagdad, and which command a passive obedience as absolute as that which a general expects from his army. Monsieur Goudureau was acute enough to understand that he was dealing with a man of this class; and therefore, when he found it necessary to unmask his batteries, he hurled this talismanic name at Poiret, who succumbed, without further resistance, to its power and unquestioned might.

"Oh! if his excellency himself, if his excellency, the—Oh! that is a very difficult matter!" said Poiret.

"You hear this gentleman, in whose judgment you appear to have confidence," continued the pretended citizen, addressing Mademoiselle Michonneau. "Well, his excellency has at last complete proof that the pretended Vautrin, now lodging at the Maison Vauquer, is an escaped convict from the galleys of Toulon, where he is known under the name of 'Trompe la Mort!'"

"Ah! Trompe la Mort!" said Poiret. "Well, that is a very good name for him, if he really merits it."

"Yes, indeed," replied the agent. "This *sobriquet* was given him because of his miraculous escapes from death in the numberless audacious enterprises in which he has been engaged. He is a very dangerous man, for he has some extraordinary qualities. His very condemnation tion is a thing which in a way has reflected great honor upon him—"

"Then he is an honorable man?" said Poiret, inquiringly.

"In his own way, yes. He consented to take upon his own shoulders the burden of another's crime, that of a beautiful young man to whom he was very much attached, a young Italian who has since entered the military service, where he has conducted himself with perfect propriety."

"But if his excellency the minister of the police, is sure that Monsieur Vautrin is Trompe la Mort, what does he want of me?" demanded Mademoiselle Michonneau.

"Ah! yes," said Poiret; "if the minister, as you have done us the honor to tell us, is really certain—"

"But he is not certain; he only suspects," returned the other. "I will tell you all about it. Jacques Collin, nicknamed Trompe la Mort, is entirely in the confidence of the three convict prisons which have chosen him for their agent and banker. He makes a great deal of money in this kind of business, which necessarily requires a man of mark."

"Ah! do you see the pun, mademoiselle?" cried Poiret. "The gentleman

calls him a man of mark, because he has been marked!"

"This pretended Vautrin," continued the agent, without seeming to notice the interruption, "receives the capital of these convicts, places it for them, takes care of it, and holds it in trust for those who escape, or for their families, when they leave it to them by will."

"You understand, mademoiselle," resumed Goudureau, "that the Government is naturally very anxious to obtain possession of this illegal sum of money, which must be a very considerable amount. Trompe la Mort possesses a sum of great value, for he not only conceals the money which his comrades possess, but that which is provided by the society of ten thousand—"

"Ten thousand thieves?" cried Poiret in a fright.

"No," replied the man. "The society of ten thousand is an association of high-toned thieves, of people who only do a large business, and who would not risk their necks in any affair which did not bring them at least ten thousand francs. They know all the points of the law, and never risk anything which might lead to their death-warrant. Collin is their confidential man, their counselor. By the aid of his immense resources he has been able to create a sort of police about him, and to establish extended relations which envelop him in an impenetrable mystery. Although we have surrounded him with spies for more than a year, we have never yet been able to get certain evidence against him. His money and his talents serve as a constant foundation for vice and crime, and as a maintenance for an army of rogues who are perpetually at war with society. To seize Trompe la Mort and to separate him from his treasure would be to strike at the root of the evil. And therefore this project has become a state affair, and it will be an honor to aid it. You yourself, monsieur, might be employed once more by the administration, and even become secretary to a police commissioner; which would not prevent you from drawing your pension just the same."

"But," asked Mademoiselle Michonneau, "why does not Trompe la Mort run away with all that money?"

"Oh!" replied the agent, "wherever he went he would be followed by a man charged to kill him, if he stole the prisoners' money. And then, a chest of money cannot be carried away as easily as one could carry off a young lady. Besides, Collin is incapable of such a thing; he would deem himself dishonored."

"Monsieur," said Poiret, "you are perfectly right; he would be dishonored."

"All this does not tell us why you do not come and take him, if you want him," observed Mademoiselle Michonneau, sharply.

"Ah! well, mademoiselle, to that question I answer— But first," he said, whispering in her ear, "if you don't keep this gentleman from interrupting me, we shall never have done. The old gentleman ought to be very rich in order to make any one willing to listen to him. Trompe la Mort," he added, "in coming here has taken on the likeness of an honest man; he has behaved himself like a good citizen of Paris, and has established himself in a respectable boarding-house; he is cunning, you see, and we cannot very well take him without proof. And then Monsieur Vautrin is a man who carries on a large business."

"That's a fact," said Poiret to himself.

"The minister," continued the agent, "if he were to arrest a true Vautrin, could not well reinstate himself in public opinion. He has many enemies, and if he should make a mistake in this thing, there are plenty of people who would be only too ready to profit by his blunder, and to turn him out of his place. And so the man must be identified."

"But I don't see," remarked Mademoiselle Michonneau, "of what use I could be. How could I identify him, even supposing that I consented to undertake it for two thousand francs?"

"There is nothing easier," returned the agent. "I will give you a flask containing a dose of liquor which will produce an entirely harmless effect, but one that will have the appearance of apoplexy.

This drug works equally well in wine or in coffee. You will immediately carry your patient to a bed, and you will undress him to see whether he is yet living. As soon as you can contrive to be alone with him, give him a smart slap upon the shoulder, and you will see the tell-tale letters reappear."

"That is perfectly easy," said Poiret.

"Come, will you do it?" asked Goudureau of the ancient female beside him.

"But, my dear sir," said she; "suppose there are no letters there; shall I get my two thousand francs in that case?"

"No," he replied.

"What would be the reward, then?"

"Five hundred francs."

"Oh!" she said. "The idea of doing so much for so little! The evil against my conscience would be just the same, and I must take care of my conscience, monsieur."

"I assure you," remarked Poiret, "that mademoiselle has a great deal of conscience, although she is a very amiable and well-meaning person."

"Well," said Mademoiselle Michonneau at last, "give me three thousand francs if he is Trompe la Mort, and nothing at all if he proves to be only a good citizen."

"I'll do it," said Goudureau, "but on condition that the business may be done to-morrow."

"Not yet, my dear sir," she said entreatingly. "I must go to confession first."

"Artful woman!" said the agent, rising to go. "Adieu, then, until to-morrow. And if you should want to speak to me, come to the little Rue Sainte Anne, at the end of the court of the Sainte Chapelle. There is only one door under the arch. Ask for Monsieur Goudureau."

Just then Bianchon, who was on his way home from his lecture, caught the rather original name of Trompe la Mort, and heard the adieu of the celebrated chief of the safety police.

"Why did you not close with his offer?" demanded Poiret. "It would have given you three hundred francs of annuity."

"Why?" she repeated. "Because I want to think about it. Suppose Monsieur Vautrin were really this Trompe la Mort, perhaps I could strike a bargain with him to still greater advantage. But then, on the other hand, to ask money of him would be to give him warning, and he might run off, money and all, and that would be too abominable!"

"Yes," said Poiret. "In that case, you would lose everything."

"Besides," thought Mademoiselle Michonneau, "I can't bear the man. He is always saying disagreeable things to me."

"But," resumed Poiret, "you ought not to hesitate. As this gentleman said, it is an act of obedience to the laws to rid society of a criminal, no matter how virtuous he may be. 'Who has drunk, will drink again.' Suppose he were to take it into his head to assassinate us all? We should really be guilty of those assassinations, to say nothing of the probability of our being the first victims."

Mademoiselle Michonneau's preoccupation prevented her from paying any attention to the sentences which trickled one by one from Poiret's mouth, like drops of water from a leaky fountain.

When once the old man began on a monologue, unless he was stopped by Mademoiselle Michonneau, he kept on interminably, like wound-up machinery. After having begun upon a particular subject, he was as likely as not to wander off to something entirely foreign to his original theme; and by the time they had arrived at the Maison Vauquer, he was involved in a complicated description of the trial of Monsieur Ragoulleau and of Madame Morin, in which he had appeared as a witness.

Upon entering the house, his companion saw Eugene de Rastignac engaged in intimate conversation with Mademoiselle Taillefer; a conversation which was evidently of such absorbing interest that the young couple paid no attention to the two old friends as they passed through the dining-room.

"That is a settled thing," said Mademoiselle Michonneau to Poiret. "They

have been making eyes at each other for a week or more."

"Yes," he replied. "And so she was condemned."

"Who?"

"Madame Morin."

"I am talking of Mademoiselle Victorine," said Mademoiselle Michonneau. "What has Madame Morin to do with it?"

"What is the matter with Mademoiselle Victorine!" asked Poiret.

"The matter with her," returned his companion, "is, that she has fallen in love with Monsieur Eugene de Rastignac, and is going forward to her fate without knowing where it will lead her, poor thing!"

XV.

Eugene de Rastignac was in a pitiable state of mind; he seemed, in spite of himself, to be yielding to Vautrin, who had grown, by reason of his strong will, to possess a strange, inexplicable power over him, the extent of which he could not fathom.

During the last hour he had plunged deeper into the morass by exchanging words and promises with Victorine which caused the girl to feel herself in the seventh heaven of delight, and which made the dingy old dining-room seem like a veritable paradise to her. Eugene dared not think whither he was being led; he loathed Vautrin's vile schemes, and yet longed for the results which they promised; and his struggles with conscience put him to the keenest torture.

While he was yet talking with Victorine, Vautrin entered the room, and catching sight of the young couple whom his diabolical genius had brought together, he sung, in his loud, mocking tones:

> "My Fanchette is charming
> In her simplicity."

Victorine, at his entrance, escaped to her own room, happier than she had ever dreamed of being. She loved, and Rastignac's words and manner told her that her love was returned. A pressure of the hands, the light touch of his hair against her cheek, a word spoken so close to her ear that she felt the warmth of his lips, a trembling arm passed around her waist, a kiss dropped lightly upon her neck, made her happy with a joy that knew no bounds, and which was heightened yet further by the knowledge that at any moment they might be interrupted by the entrance of the fat cook, a knowledge which only lent one delight the more to the charming romance of the occasion.

"The business is settled," said Vautrin to Eugene, when they were left alone. "Our two friends have quarreled. It all occurred with perfect propriety; it was about a difference of opinion, and our young man insulted my friend. It is to be to-morrow, in the redoubt of Clignancourt, and at half past eight o'clock, while Mademoiselle Taillefer is eating her bread and butter, and tranquilly drinking her coffee, she will be inheriting the love and the fortune of her papa. Does it not seem droll? Young Taillefer is very skillful with his sword, and perfectly confident of success; but he will be overcome by a peculiar upward stroke which I have taught my friend, and which I must teach you some time; it is wonderfully useful."

Eugene listened as if dazed, and was unable to utter a syllable in reply. Just then Pere Goriot, Bianchon, and several others came into the room.

"That is as I like to see you," said Vautrin, in a tone of satisfaction. "You have come to your senses at last, and know what you are about. Oh! you will yet be at the top of the heap; you are strong and upright, and you have my sincere esteem."

He attempted to take the young man's hand, but Rastignac drew it quickly away, and sunk, pale and trembling, into a chair.

It seemed as if a sea of blood rolled before him.

"Ah! we still have some little qualms of conscience!" said Vautrin, in a low voice. "Papa Taillefer has three millions; I have been inquiring about his

fortune. The marriage dowry will make you white and clean in your own eyes."

Rastignac no longer hesitated; he resolved to go that evening, and warn the Taillefers, father and son. While he was deep in meditation, after Vautrin had left him, Pere Goriot approached him and said in his ear:

"You look sad, my son. I have something which will make you happy. Come!" and the old man lighted his candle at one of the lamps, and left the room, followed by Eugene, whose curiosity was aroused.

"Let us come into your room," said Pere Goriot, producing the key which he had obtained from Sylvia.

"You thought this morning that she did not love you, did you not?" he continued, chuckling. "She sent you away from her, and you went, angry and despairing. Foolish boy! She was expecting me. Do you understand now? We had to go together to finish arranging a little *bijou* of an apartment which we have been getting ready for you, and in which you will take up your abode, three days hence. Do not betray me, will you? She wants to surprise you, but I don't believe in keeping the secret from you any longer. You will be in the Rue d'Artois, two steps from the Rue Saint Lazare; and you will be lodged like a prince. We have had furniture put into it, fit for a bridegroom. We have been very busy during this last month, without letting you know anything about it. My lawyer has taken up her case, and my daughter will have, after this, her thirty-six thousand francs a year, the interest of her dowry, and I shall insist upon having her eight hundred thousand francs put into some good safe investment."

Eugene answered nothing, but walked, with folded arms, up and down the little littered-up room. Pere Goriot seized the opportunity, when the student's back was turned, to place upon the chimney-piece a red morocco box, on which were imprinted in gold the arms of Rastignac.

"My dear boy," said the poor old man, "I have been very much interested in these preparations; but, you see, I have a selfish reason for wanting you to change your quarters. You will not refuse me, will you, if I ask a favor of you?"

"What do you want?"

"Above your apartment, on the fifth floor, there is a little room which goes with it; I can live there, can I not? I am an old man, and here I am too far from my daughters. I will not disturb you; only I shall be there, where you can talk to me of her every evening. You will not mind that, will you? When you come in at night, if I am in bed, I can hear you, and I will say to myself: 'He has just seen my little Delphine. He took her to the ball, and she has been happy with him.' If I should be ill, it would be such a comfort to me to listen to you as you went back and forth. I should only be a step from the Champs Elysées, where they go every day, and I could always see them, whereas now I often get there too late. And then, perhaps she will come to see you sometimes, and I can look at her in her pretty morning freshness.

"During the last month she has seemed just as she used to when she was a young, light-hearted girl; and she owes her happiness to you. Oh, I would do anything in the world for you! Just now, when we were returning, she said to me: 'Papa, I am so happy!' When they call me '*Mon père*,' ceremoniously, I feel as if they froze me; but when they say 'papa,' they seem to be once more my own little girls, and I forget that they belong to any one else."

The good man stopped a moment to wipe the tears from his eyes, and then continued:

"It is such a long time since I have heard that word, such a long time since I have walked arm-in-arm with her. For ten years I have not walked beside my daughters. Oh, it is such a delight to brush against their dresses, to guide their steps, to feel them so near me. Well, this morning I went everywhere with Delphine. I went into the shops with her; and I brought her safe home again afterward. Oh, I beg of you to keep me near you. Some time you will want some one to do you a service, and then I shall be there, ready. If that

great stupid Alsatian would only die! If his gout would only have the kindness to get into his stomach, my poor girl would at last be happy; for you would be my son-in-law, and her husband.

"She loves you so much," he continued, after a pause, shaking his head. "While we were together, she was talking of you. 'Is he not good?' she said; 'has he not a good heart? talk to me of him.' She told me volumes; she opened her heart to me. During this whole delicious morning, I have been young again; I have felt as light as a feather. I told her that you had given me that bill for a thousand francs, and she was moved even to tears. What have you got there on your chimney-piece?" the old man continued, his patience finally exhausted by Rastignac's want of observation.

Eugene started, and looked stupidly at his companion. The thought of the duel, which Vautrin had announced to take place on the morrow, contrasted so violently with this realization of his brightest dreams, that he felt as if he were in a nightmare. Turning toward the chimney-piece, he perceived the little square box, and opened it to find within it a paper, and beneath the paper a Breguet watch. Upon the paper was written:

"Think of me every hour, because—
"DELPHINE."

This last word was doubtless in reference to something which had passed between them. Eugene was much affected by the gift. His arms were engraved on the gold case. The watch, so long desired, the chain, the key, the style of it, were all exactly to his taste.

Pere Goriot was radiant; he had promised to tell his daughter exactly how Eugene appeared when he received the watch, and he seemed no less happy over it than the young man. He already loved Rastignac, both for his daughter's sake and for his own.

"You will go and see her to-night, will you not?" he said. "The stupid Alsatian will not be at home. Oh! I would like to kill that man! It would not be homicide either, for he is only a calf's head on a pig's body. And I may live with you, may I not?"

"Yes, indeed, my good Pere Goriot," replied Eugene; "you know very well that I love you."

"I see that you are not ashamed of me," returned the old man. "Let me embrace you;" and he pressed the student to his heart. "Promise me that you will make her happy," he said; "you will go there this evening, will you not?"

"Yes, indeed; but I must also attend to some business which cannot be postponed."

"Can I be of any help to you?"

"Indeed you can," returned Eugene. "While I go to Madame Nucingen's, I wish you would go to Monsieur Taillefer's, and ask him to grant me an hour this evening, on business of the very greatest importance."

"Is it true, young man?" said Pere Goriot, his countenance suddenly changing; "are you paying court to his daughter, as those fools downstairs say? If you are, I swear to you, you shall feel the weight of a Goriot's vengeance. Oh! but it is impossible that you can be deceiving us!"

"I tell you solemnly and truly that I love only one woman in all the world," replied the student. "I knew it a minute ago, if never before."

"Ah! what happiness!" sighed Pere Goriot.

"But," continued the student, "Monsieur Taillefer's son is going to fight a duel to-morrow, and I have heard that he will be killed."

"What has that to do with you?" asked Pere Goriot.

"He must be warned not to let his son—" cried Eugene. But he was interrupted by Vautrin's voice outside the door, singing:

"O Richard, O my king!
The world abandons you."

"Gentlemen," cried Christopher, "the soup is ready, and everybody else is at table."

"Here!" called Vautrin to the ser-

vant; "come and get a bottle of my Bordeaux wine."

"Do you think the watch is pretty?" asked Pere Goriot. "Don't you think she had good taste?"

Vautrin, Pere Goriot, and Eugene went down together, and found themselves, by reason of their delay, placed side by side. Eugene's manner toward Vautrin during dinner was cold in the extreme, although the man had never been more entertaining. He fairly sparkled with wit, and was the life of the company. His assurance and coolness completely amazed Eugene.

"Where have you been to-day?" asked Madame Vauquer at last. "You are as merry as a lark."

"I am always merry when I have done a good stroke of business," he replied.

"Business?" said Eugene, questioningly.

"Yes," he returned. "I have done a good stroke of business, and one that ought to bring me a good commission." Then, perceiving that Mademoiselle Michonneau was looking at him attentively, he said suddenly:

"Mademoiselle, is there any feature in my face that displeases you, since you stare so? If there is, you have only to mention it, and we will have it changed immediately. I would do almost anything to make you happy, you know. Poiret, you won't get angry at that, will you?" he continued, turning and leering at the old man.

"Upon my word, you might pose as the clown in a circus," said the young painter to Vautrin.

"I would do it," he returned, "if Mademoiselle Michonneau would pose as the Venus of Pere la Chaise."

"And Poiret?" asked Bianchon.

"Oh, Poiret might pose as Poiret; he couldn't very well be anything else," returned Vautrin.

"Come, you are all talking nonsense," observed Madame Vauquer; "and Monsieur Vautrin would do much better to give us some of that Bordeaux wine of his out of the bottle which he has by him there. That would make us happy, and would be good for our stomachs, besides."

"Gentlemen," said Vautrin, "Madame la Presidente recalls us to order. Madame Couture and Mademoiselle Victorine do not object to our playful remarks, but I beseech you to spare the innocence of Pere Goriot. I have the honor of proposing to you a bottle of Bordeaux wine. Come, Chinaman," he said, looking at Christopher, who did not move. "Here, Christopher! What! don't you know your own name? Chinaman, bring on the liquids!"

"Here it is, sir," said Christopher, handing the bottle to him.

After having filled Eugene's glass, and that of Pere Goriot, Vautrin poured out a few drops for himself, which he slowly tasted while his two neighbors were drinking; suddenly he made a wry face.

"Bah!" he said. "It tastes of the cork. Christopher, take this one for yourself and bring us another. At the right-hand side, you know. There are sixteen of us; bring down eight bottles."

"Since we are in for it," said the artist, "I will pay for a hundred chestnuts."

"Oh! oh!"

"Booououh!"

"Prrr!"

The exclamations flew about the table like sparks from a wheel.

"Come now, Madame Vauquer!" cried Vautrin, "let us have two of champagne."

"What is that?" she exclaimed. "Two of champagne? Why not ask for the house at once? Why, that would cost twelve francs! I never could afford it. But if Monsieur Eugene wishes to pay for it, I will offer some ratafia."

"Very well," said Rastignac, "send for the champagne; I will pay for it."

"Sylvia," said Madame Vauquer, "bring the biscuits and the little cakes."

As the wine began to circulate, the gayety redoubled; laughter and song resounded, and there arose a perfect uproar of street cries and animals' calls; the noise was deafening. In the midst of it all, and leader of it all, Vautrin yet kept close watch of Eugene and Pere Goriot, who appeared to be already intoxicated. Leaning back in their chairs and drinking little, they both sat gravely

watching the unaccustomed tumult; each was preoccupied with thoughts of what he had to do that evening, and yet each felt a strange torpor through every limb. Vautrin, who was watching them narrowly, and marking every change in their countenances, seized the moment when their eyelids wavered and seemed about to close, to bend toward Eugene and to whisper in his ear:

"My dear boy, you are not cunning enough to carry on a war with Vautrin, and he loves you too well to permit you to do silly things. When I have once taken a resolve, God alone is strong enough to thwart me. You were going to warn Papa Taillefer, were you? Do you think I would let you snatch the bread from your own mouth? Not at all! If we still have some lingering grains of remorse, we will soon get over it. And while we are sleeping, the Colonel Count Franchessini will open the inheritance of Michel Taillefer with the point of his sword. As her brother's heiress, Victorine will have fifteen thousand francs income. I have made inquiries, and learned that from her mother's property she will have more than three hundred thousand—"

Rastignac heard these words without being able to reply to them; his tongue seemed glued to the roof of his mouth, and he felt unconquerably drowsy; he seemed to be looking at the table and the people through a luminous fog. Then, when everybody had gone away except Madame Vauquer, Madame Couture, Victorine, Vautrin and Pere Goriot, he perceived, as in a dream, Madame Vauquer, who was going about the tables, emptying the contents of the bottles one into another, in order to make full bottles.

"Ah! they are young and foolish!" said the widow. And that was the last sentence that Eugene heard or understood.

"It takes Monsieur Vautrin to make a jolly time," said Sylvia; "there is Christopher out there, snoring like a humming-top!"

"Adieu, Madame Vauquer," said Vautrin. "I am going to the boulevard to see Monsieur Marty in 'Le Mont Sauvage,' a magnificent piece taken from the 'Solitaire.' If you would like to go I will take you, and these ladies also."

"I thank you," said Madame Couture, but with a gesture of refusal.

"What!" cried Madame Vauquer, "you decline to see a play taken from the 'Solitaire,' one of Chateaubriand's works, over which we wept only this very last summer; a perfectly moral story, which cannot but have the effect of instructing mademoiselle?"

"We are forbidden to go to the theater," said Victorine.

"Hallo! they are done for!" said Vautrin, touching Pere Goriot and Eugene facetiously. And as he placed the young student's head back against the chair, where he could sleep comfortably, he pressed an ardent kiss upon the forehead, singing:

"Sleep, my well-beloved!
I will watch o'er you ever."

"I am afraid he is ill," said Victorine.

"Then stay and take care of him," returned Vautrin; and leaning over her he whispered, "It is no more than your duty. This young man adores you, and you will yet be his little wife, mark my words!" Then he added aloud: "They were beloved by everybody, and led a long and happy life! that is the way all love-stories end. Come!" he said suddenly, turning toward Madame Vauquer, and putting his arm around her waist, "go and put on your finery, and I will fetch a hackney-couch;" and he went out singing.

"Upon my word!" said Madame Vauquer, "that man makes things lively around a house. Just look at Pere Goriot!" she added, "what a shameful state for a man of his years to get into. Sylvia, take him up to his room."

Sylvia came, got hold of him under his arms, and by dint of pushing and hauling got him up to his own room and tossed him upon the bed like a parcel.

"Poor young man," said Madame Couture, brushing a stray lock of Eugene's hair out of his eyes, "he is like a young girl; he does not know what excess is."

"Ah! I can well say," observed Madame Vauquer, "that although in the thirty-one years during which I have kept this house many young men have passed through my hands, as it were, there has never been one as handsome and distinguished-looking as Monsieur Eugene. How beautiful he is when he is sleeping! Lay his head on your shoulder, Madame Couture. Ah! it has fallen on Mademoiselle Victorine's; there is a divinity that watches over young people. Draw him a little further over; his head is hitting against the back of the chair. What a pretty couple they make!"

"Hold your tongue," cried Madame Couture. "You should not say such things."

"Oh, he can't hear me," returned the landlady. "Come, Sylvia, come and help me dress. I am going to put on my new bodice."

"Your new bodice right after dinner!" cried Sylvia, in a tone of horror. "Very well! then you will have to get some one else to lace it up for you. I will not be responsible for your murder. It is as much as your life is worth."

"Nonsense! I want to honor Monsieur Vautrin."

"I suppose, then, you are very fond of your heirs?"

"Come, Sylvia, no more words," said the widow, leaving the room.

"At her age!" grumbled the fat cook, as she followed her mistress.

XVI.

Madame Couture and her protégée, on whose shoulder Eugene's head was resting, remained alone in the dining-room. Christopher's snores resounded through the house, and contrasted forcibly with the peaceful slumbers of Eugene, who was sleeping as quietly as a child. Victorine, proud and happy, sat and watched over him with a loving tenderness which made Madame Couture sigh and murmur: "Poor, dear child," and she looked at her.

"He did not drink more than two glasses in all, mamma," said the girl, passing her fingers through Eugene's luxuriant hair.

"That is all the more to his credit, my dear," replied the other, "for if he had been a regular debauchee, two glasses would have had no effect upon him; his present condition therefore is really a proof of his good character."

At this moment a carriage stopped before the house.

"Mamma," said Victorine hastily, "there is Monsieur Vautrin, and I do not want him to see me sitting like this. He would be sure to say something disagreeable. He has a way of saying things that are not nice for a girl to hear. Please raise Monsieur Eugene from my shoulder."

"Nonsense," said Madame Couture; "you are much mistaken; Monsieur Vautrin is a very good man. A little brusk, perhaps, after the style of the late Monsieur Couture, but very good-hearted."

Just then Vautrin softly entered the room, and saw the *tableau* before him, lighted up by the caressing rays of the lamp.

"Well!" he said, crossing his arms. "This is a picture that would have inspired the author of 'Paul and Virginia,' himself. How beautiful is youth, Madame Couture. Poor boy, sleep on," he added, looking at Eugene. "Fortune sometimes comes to us while we sleep. Madame," he continued, addressing the widow, "the thing that most attaches me to this young man is to know that the beauty of his soul harmonizes with that of his face. He is well worthy of being loved. If I were a woman, I would die for him—or better still, I would live for him.

"As I sit here admiring them, madame," he continued, leaning over the widow and speaking in a low voice, "I cannot help thinking that they were made for one another. Providence has ways of its own; and I cannot believe that these two will ever be separated. Let me see," he added, to the young girl, "I am quite a fortune-teller, and

it seems to me that I have noticed lines of prosperity on your palm. Let me take your hand, if you please. Don't be afraid. Ah! what do I see? Upon the word of an honest man, you will before long be one of the richest heiresses in Paris. You will heap favors upon the one whom you love. Your father will summon you to his home, and you will marry a young, beautiful, titled man, who adores you."

He was interrupted by the heavy steps of the coquettish widow as she descended the stairs and entered the room.

"Here is our dear Madame Vauquer," he said, "as beautiful as a star and laced within an inch of her life. Are you not a wee bit stifled?" he continued, laying his hand upon her waist. "I doubt if you could laugh with any safety; but if there should be an explosion I will pick up the pieces with the devotion of an antiquary.

"Adieu, my children," he continued, turning to Victorine and Eugene, and laying his broad hands upon their heads. "May Heaven bless you! The good wishes of an honest man, mademoiselle, are not to be despised, for they often bring happiness."

"Adieu, my dear friend," said Madame Vauquer to the widow. "Do you suppose," she added in a low voice, "that Monsieur Vautrin really means anything serious by his attentions to me?"

Madame Couture shook her head mysteriously at this, but made no reply.

"Ah! dear mamma," sighed Victorine, looking at her hands when the two women were once more alone, "if Monsieur Vautrin should be right!"

"There is only one thing that could bring it about," replied the lady, "and that is, if your monster of a brother should tumble from his horse."

"Oh, mamma!"

"Perhaps it is a sin to wish evil even to one's enemy," continued the widow. "Ah, well, I will do penance for it. But really, I should enjoy placing flowers upon his grave, the false-hearted, unnatural monster!"

"But I should not wish to gain happiness through any one's death," said Victorine. "Rather than do that, I should prefer to remain as I am all the days of my life."

"Ah, well!" sighed Madame Couture, "who knows by what mysterious paths it will please Providence to conduct us?"

With Sylvia's aid the two women finally succeeded in carrying Eugene to his room and laying him upon his bed. When Madame Couture's back was turned, Victorine pressed an ardent kiss upon Eugene's forehead, cast a hasty glance around his room, and then ran away to think over the events of the day, and finally to fall asleep, the happiest creature in all Paris.

The festival over which Vautrin had presided, and during which he had found the opportunity to administer the drugged wine to Eugene and Pere Goriot, was in reality the cause of his own ruin. Bianchon, half tipsy, forgot to question Mademoiselle Michonneau about Trompe la Mort. If he had only pronounced this name, he would have awakened the suspicions of Vautrin; or, to give him his real name, of Jacques Collin, one of the celebrities of the convict prison. And then again, the *sobriquet* of "Venus of the Pere la Chaise," which he had bestowed upon Mademoiselle Michonneau, was the last straw in the balance, which by arousing that worthy lady's indignation caused her to decide to give up the convict, instead of trying to make terms with him by warning him of his danger. Accordingly, after dinner, she and Poiret went to the little Rue Sainte Anne, in search of the chief of police, whom they still supposed to be merely an employé named Goudureau.

He received them graciously, and they had an interview in which they arranged every detail. When Mademoiselle Michonneau asked for the potion by the aid of which she was to verify the mark upon the man's shoulder, he went with such evident satisfaction to seek the vial from a drawer, that the lady shrewdly suspected that the affair involved something more than the capture of a mere convict. And by cudgeling her brains, she arrived

at the conclusion that the police, guided by the revelations of some prison-traitor, hoped to carry through the business in time to lay their hands upon a considerable amount of treasure. But when she mentioned her convictions to the sly Goudureau, he only smiled, and tried to divert her mind from its suspicions.

"You are mistaken," he said. "Collin is the most dangerous fellow that ever arrayed himself upon the side of thieves and felons. That is all. The knaves all know him well. He is their flag, their prop, their Bonaparte; and they every one love him. We never should be able to take him without your help.

"The best way to treat such fellows," he continned, "is to kill them if they make the least resistance when they are arrested. In that way society gets rid of the expenses of the law, of guards, nourishment, etc.; there are a hundred ways of spending at the trial more money than you will receive from us. By giving Trompe la Mort a good bayonet-thrust, we could economize both time and money, to say nothing of trouble. According to my ideas, that is the proper way to carry on the work of the police; and true philanthropists contend that this is the only sure way to prevent crimes."

"It is really serving one's country," said Poiret.

"You are talking quite sensibly this evening," returned the chief. "Yes, we should really be serving our country. Well, mademoiselle, I shall have the honor of bidding you good-evening. I will be with my men in the Jardin du Roi to-morrow. Sir, at your service! If you ever have anything stolen from you, just call upon me, and I shall be happy to do my best for you."

"Well!" said Poiret to his companion, when they were once more alone, "some people are scared out of their senses by the very word police, but this gentleman is really very amiable and agreeable; and what he wants you to do is perfectly simple."

The following day was one of the most remarkable in the history of the Maison Vauquer, and furnished its landlady with subject matter for conversation for the rest of her life. Until then, the most startling event in the history of the place had been the meteoric apparition of the false Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil. But even that paled and faded away before the excitements and wonders of the present time.

In the first place, Goriot and Eugene de Rastignac slept until eleven o'clock in the morning. Madame Vauquer, who had been at the theater until midnight of the previous evening, did not leave her bed until half past ten. The lengthened slumber of Christopher, who had finished the wine in the bottle given him by Vautrin, caused all the work of the house to be delayed. Poiret and Mademoiselle Michonneau were always only too glad when breakfast was late; and as for Victorine and Madame Couture, they slept the whole morning. Vautrin went out before eight o'clock, and did not return until breakfast was on the table. Therefore nobody objected, although it was nearly quarter past eleven before Christopher and Sylvia knocked at the various doors with the announcement that breakfast was ready. Mademoiselle Michonneau seized the opportunity, while the dining-room was empty, to come down before the others, and pour the liquid into the silver cup belonging to Vautrin, as it stood among all the others, with the cream for his coffee in it. The worthy lady had counted upon this custom of the house in laying her plans.

It took some time for the seven boarders to assemble; and when Eugene, stretching and yawning, appeared last of all, he was met by a messenger, who handed him a letter from Madame de Nucingen, which read as follows:

"I am a little hurt and angry with you, my friend, and not without reason. I waited for you last night until after midnight. The idea of giving me such torture! It is very easy to see that you now love for the first time. What has happened? I am very anxious. I should have come to find out for myself, if it had been a suitable thing for me to do; but I

often realize my misfortune in being a woman, trammeled by conventionalities. Tell me why you did not come, after what my father said to you. I shall be angry, but I will pardon you. Are you ill? Why do you live so far off? Send me a word, in pity! Only one word will suffice, if you are very busy; say merely: 'I am coming,' or 'I am ill.' But if you had been ill, my father would have come to tell me. What can have happened?"

"Yes, what has happened?" cried Eugene, rushing into the dining-room, and crushing the letter in his hand. "What time is it?"

"Half-past eleven," cried Vautrin, sugaring his coffee.

The escaped convict fastened upon Eugene one of those coldly fascinating looks which certain people, eminently endowed with magnetism, have the gift of bestowing, and which, they say, are often used to control madmen; and Eugene, cowering under its influence, trembled in every limb.

Just then the noise of a carriage was heard in the street, and a servant in the livery of Monsieur Taillefer, whom Madame Couture immediately recognized, came hurrying into the room with a frightened air.

"Mademoiselle," he cried, "your father has sent for you. Something dreadful has happened. Monsieur Frederic has fallen in a duel; he has received a sword-cut on the forehead, and the physicians have given him up; you will scarcely have time to see him before he dies; he has already lost consciousness."

"Poor young man!" said Vautrin. "How can any one, who has an income of thirty thousand pounds, get into a quarrel? Truly, youth is rash and reckless."

"Sir!" cried Eugene.

"Well, what is it?" said Vautrin, tranquilly drinking his coffee; an operation which Mademoiselle Michonneau watched with so much interest that she failed to be moved by the exciting news which seemed to have stupefied everybody else. "Are there not duels in Paris every day?"

"I will go with you, Victorine," said Madame Couture; and the two ladies hastened out, without stopping for shawl or bonnet. As they left the room, Victorine, with streaming eyes, cast upon Eugene a look which seemed to say:

"I never thought to shed so many tears over a thing which will bring us happiness."

"And so you are a prophet, Monsieur Vautrin?" said Madame Vauquer.

"I am everything!" replied Jacques Collin.

"It is very strange," continued the widow; and she began moralizing in a succession of those trite remarks with which some people are always supplied at such a time, as for instance:

"Death takes us all, without consulting us. The young often go before the old. Women are fortunate not to be obliged to fight duels; but then, they have other things to bear, which are even worse. What luck for Victorine! Her father will have to adopt her now."

"That is so!" said Vautrin, looking at Eugene. "Yesterday she was not worth a sou, and to-day she has several millions."

"See here, Monsieur Eugene," cried Madame Vauquer; "you have put your hand on a good thing!"

At these words Pere Goriot looked up at the student, and caught sight of the crumpled paper in his hand.

"You have not finished reading it; what does this mean? are you like all the rest?" he asked.

"Madame, I shall never marry Mademoiselle Victorine," said Eugene to Madame Vauquer, in a tone of horror and disgust, utterly incomprehensible to his listener.

Pere Goriot seized the student's hand and squeezed it; he would have kissed it if he had dared.

"Oh, ho!" said Vautrin, mockingly. "The Italians have a good expression: '*col tempo.*'"

"I am waiting for an answer," said Madame de Nucingen's messenger to Eugene.

"Say that I will come," he replied, briefly; and the man went away.

Eugene was in a violent state of irritation, which made him lose sight of all prudence.

"What can I do?" he said aloud to himself. "There are no proofs!"

Vautrin smiled wickedly. At that moment the drug absorbed by his stomach began to produce its effect, but the convict was so strong that for a moment he was able to throw aside its influence; he rose, looked at Rastignac, and said in a hollow voice: "Young man, fortune sometimes comes to us while we sleep."

And he fell to the floor like one dead.

"That is divine justice," said Eugene, solemnly.

"Oh, what is the matter with poor, dear Monsieur Vautrin?" cried the landlady, wildly.

"It is apoplexy!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Michonneau.

"Sylvia! come, my good girl, run for the doctor," said the widow. "Ah! Monsieur Rastignac, do go quickly for Monsieur Bianchon. Sylvia may not be able to find our own doctor, Monsieur Grimprel."

Rastignac, thankful for any excuse that would permit him to leave the hateful place, set off at a run.

"Come, Christopher," added the landlady; "go quickly and ask the apothecary for something to cure apoplexy;" and Christopher went at once.

"Now, Pere Goriot, help us to carry him upstairs to his room," she said; and Vautrin was seized, hauled up the staircase, and laid upon his bed.

"I can be of no use to you; I am going to see my daughter," said Pere Goriot, when the job was accomplished.

"You selfish old thing!" cried Madame Vauquer; "go along with you, then! and I hope you will die like a dog."

"Madame Vauquer, just go and see if you have any sal volatile," said Mademoiselle Michonneau, who, with the help of Poiret, had loosened Vautrin's clothing; and Madame Vauquer, going down to her own room, left Mademoiselle Michonneau mistress of the field of battle.

"Come! take off his shirt, and turn him over quickly," she said to Poiret. "Make yourself useful, and don't stand there like a stick!"

When the unconscious man had been rolled over, the lady applied a smart slap to his uncovered shoulder; and there, sure enough, were the fatal letters, standing out white and clear upon the red background.

"Well! you have earned those three thousand francs easily!" observed Poiret, as he held the man up, while Mademoiselle Michonneau put on his shirt once more. "Whew! but he is heavy!" he added, as he laid him down.

"Hold your tongue! Do you suppose there is a chest of treasure here?" asked his companion, whose eyes were examining the room with such keenness that they seemed to pierce the very walls. "If we only had some excuse for opening this writing-desk," she added, doubtfully.

"I am afraid that would be wrong," said Poiret.

"No," she returned; "stolen money, having been everybody's, is no longer anybody's. But we haven't time," she added. "I hear Madame Vauquer coming."

"Here is the sal volatile," said the landlady, hastening in. "What a day of adventure this is, to be sure! Why," she continued, looking at Vautrin; "the man can't be sick! he is as white as a chicken!"

"As a chicken?" repeated Poiret.

"His heart beats regularly," continued the widow, laying her hand upon his breast.

"Regularly?" echoed Poiret, in a tone of astonishment.

"He is all right," she continued.

"You think so?" demanded Poiret.

"He looks exactly as if he were sleeping. Sylvia has gone for a doctor. See, Mademoiselle Michonneau! he is sniffing at the sal volatile. It is nothing but a fit. His pulse is perfectly good. He is as strong as a Turk; the man will live a hundred years. His wig stays on well; see, it is fastened on; he has false hair; his own is red. They say that red-headed people are either entirely good or entirely bad; he must be one of the good kind."

"Good for hanging!" observed Poiret.

"You mean, for hanging upon a pretty woman's neck," said Mademoiselle Michonneau, quickly. "Come, Poiret! go away now; it is the place of us women to take care of sick people. Besides, you might just as well be out walking, for all the good you do," she added. "Madame Vauquer and I will take good care of dear Monsieur Vautrin."

Poiret went softly, without a murmur, as a dog goes that has been kicked by his master.

Rastignac had also left the house, for he wanted a long walk in the open air; he felt stifled. He had meant to prevent this crime, and yet it had taken place at the appointed hour. What had happened? And what ought he to do? He dreaded being thought an accomplice; and Vautrin's coolness seemed horrible to him.

"But suppose Vautrin should die without speaking?" he thought. He rushed through the alleys of the Luxembourg, as though he were pursued by a pack of hounds; he even seemed to hear them baying behind him.

"Hallo!" cried Bianchon, meeting him suddenly: "have you read the 'Pilote'?"

The "Pilote" was a radical sheet under the direction of M. Tissot, which issued an edition, several hours after the morning journals, containing the very latest news.

"There is a famous bit of gossip in it," continued the medical student. "Taillefer's son has fallen in a duel with the Count de Franchessini, of the old guard, who has put two inches of steel into his forehead; and here is our little Victorine, one of the richest *partis* in Paris. Alas! if one had only known! What a lottery is death! Is it true that Victorine is sweet on you, eh?"

"Hold your tongue, Bianchon; I shall never marry her. I already love a charming woman, who loves me, and—"

"You say that as if you were struggling to be faithful to her," observed Bianchon, shrewdly; "show me a woman who is worth the sacrifice of Taillefer's fortune."

"Are all the fiends after me?" cried Eugene, in desperation.

"What's the matter now?" said Bianchon. "Are you crazy? Let's feel your pulse; you are feverish!"

"They want you at Madame Vauquer's," said Eugene suddenly. "That old rascal of a Vautrin has just had a stroke of some kind."

"Ah!" said Bianchon, as he went on his way; "I have had my suspicions for some time; now I will go and see if I can verify them."

XVII.

THE law student took a long walk and a solemn one that day. In it he arraigned himself before his conscience, and carefully examined himself and his position. He struggled and hesitated, but he came out from the terrible conflict proven like a bar of iron that has successfully resisted all attacks. He recalled the information which Pere Goriot had given him on the previous evening; he remembered the apartment chosen for him near Delphine, in the Rue d'Artois; and he took out her letter, re-read it and kissed it.

"Such a love is my sheet-anchor," he thought. "This poor old man has suffered terribly; he never speaks of his troubles, but it is only too easy to guess them! Ah! well; I will try to be like a son to him, and give him pleasure if I can. If she love me, she will often come and pass the day near him. The grand Comtesse de Restaud is a wicked woman, for she would turn her own father into something no better than a porter. But dear Delphine is kinder to him; she is indeed worthy of my love. Ah! I shall see her and be happy once more, this evening." And as he mused, he drew out the beautiful watch and looked at it admiringly.

His struggle lasted a long time; but an ungovernable curiosity finally drew him, about half past four, just as darkness was falling, to the Maison Vauquer. He longed to know if Vautrin was dead.

After having given him an emetic, Bianchon had carried the contents of Vautrin's stomach to the hospital, to be

analyzed. Mademoiselle Michonneau's violent opposition to this plan, and unconcealed anxiety to have them thrown away, instead, only confirmed his suspicions. Besides, Vautrin's recovery was too rapid for Bianchon not to suspect some foul play. When Eugene entered, Vautrin was standing by the stove in the dining-room; and the other boarders, drawn together earlier than usual by the news of young Taillefer's duel, and by their curiosity to know what effect it would have upon Victorine's destiny, were all there, with the exception of Pere Goriot. As Rastignac came in, his eyes met Vautrin's, and the man's look penetrated so deeply into his soul and stirred there such evil thoughts, that he shuddered involuntarily.

"Well, my young friend," said the ex-convict to him, "you see that I have failed to shuffle off the mortal coil this time. According to these good ladies, I have survived a stroke which would have killed an ox." Then leaning forward, he whispered, "Are you sorry to see me alive?" For with his diabolical skill he seemed to read Eugene's very thoughts.

"Ah!" said Bianchon suddenly, "Mademoiselle Michonneau was talking day before yesterday about a gentleman who was called Trompe la Mort, and upon my word, I think the name would suit you very well."

These words fell like a thunderbolt upon Vautrin; he grew pale and tottered, while his magnetic gaze fell searchingly as a ray of sunlight upon Mademoiselle Michonneau, who was completely unnerved by it. She dropped feebly upon a chair, and Poiret, divining that she was in danger, stepped quickly between her and Vautrin, for the convict's benign mask, beneath which he concealed his real nature, had dropped for a moment, and his face was fairly ferocious.

Without understanding the meaning of the scene, the other boarders stood breathlessly looking on; when suddenly there was heard the tramp of several men and the noise of guns ringing against the pavements of the street. While Collin vainly and almost mechanically looked about him for some means of escape, four men showed themselves at the drawing-room door. The first was the chief of police, and the others were officers.

"In the name of the law and of the king!" said one of the officers; but his words were lost in the murmurs of astonishment around him.

Silence soon reigned in the dining-room, however, the boarders having drawn apart to make room for three of the men, who advanced, each with a hand upon the loaded pistol which he carried in his pocket. Two policemen, who followed, occupied the drawing-room door in their place, and two others showed themselves at the one which led to the staircase. The steps and the guns of several soldiers resounded upon the pavement before the house, and all hope of escape was thus cut off from Trompe la Mort, upon whom all eyes were fastened.

The chief went straight up to him, and began by giving his wig a violent blow which knocked it completely off, and revealed Collin's head in all its horror. His short, brick-red hair gave a frightful air of mingled force and cunning to his features, and his head seemed as if lighted up by all the fires of hell. The blood flew to his face, and his eyes shone like those of a wildcat. He gave one spring of ferocious energy, and uttered a roar which made the boarders scream with terror. At this the agents drew their pistols, and at sight of the shining barrels Collin suddenly controlled himself with almost superhuman strength, and like a volcano which, in the midst of a terrible eruption, suddenly ceases to vomit forth flame and smoke, he stood perfectly still, and even smiled as he looked down upon his wig.

"You seem to have forgotten your politeness," he said to the chief; then, holding out his hands to the policemen, he added:

"Gentlemen, put on the handcuffs. I call everybody here present to witness that I make no resistance."

A murmur of admiration at his self-control ran through the room, and when it had died away he remarked, turning to the chief:

"This rather checkmates you, monsieur!"

"Come and search him!" said the man, with a disdainful gesture.

"Why?" asked Collin. "I deny nothing, and I give myself up."

He paused, and looked around upon the assembled company like an orator who is on the point of making a speech which will astonish his audience.

"Write, Papa Lachapelle," he said, addressing a little old man with white hair, who had seated himself at the end of the table, after having drawn from a portfolio the verbal process of the arrest. "I acknowledge myself to be Jacques Collin, called Trompe la Mort, condemned to twenty years at the galleys; and I have just proved that I deserve my cognomen; for," he added, turning to the spectators, "if I had so much as raised my hand these three brave fellows would have scattered my brains upon Mother Vauquer's very hearthstone."

Madame Vauquer was completely overcome by these words.

"Oh! it is enough to make one ill," she said to Sylvia. "And to think that only last night I went with him to the theater!"

"And are you any the worse for having been in my box at the Gaieté last night?" cried Collin, overhearing her words. "Are you any better than we? We have less infamy upon our shoulders than you have in your hearts, you feeble members of a festering society; the best of you could not resist me!" and letting his eyes rest upon Rastignac, he gave him a kindly smile which contrasted singularly with the harsh expression of his face.

"Our little bargain holds good, all the same, in case of being accepted," he said. And with the words, "You understand," he sung:

"'My Fanchette is charming
In her simplicity.'

Who has betrayed me?" he continued, looking with his terrible gaze around the room and stopping at Mademoiselle Michonneau: "It is you," he said, "you old hag. You gave me something to cause that false apoplectic fit. Ah! with two words I could have your head sawed from your body in a week's time. But I am a Christian, and I forgive you, especially as it was not you who betrayed me in the first place. But who could it have been? Aha!" he cried, hearing the officers overhead, as they opened his closets and searched among his things, "you are rummaging there, are you? But the bird has flown, and the nest has been empty since yesterday, and you will find nothing!

"My business books are there, though!" he continued, as if to himself, smiting his forehead with his broad hand as he spoke, "and I know now who betrayed me. It was that villain of a Fil de Soie. Was it not?" he said, turning to the chief of police. "It agrees too well with the sojourn of our bank-bills up yonder. All right, my dears. As for Fil de Soie, he will be underground in less than a fortnight, no matter if you were to guard him with the whole strength of your garrison. What have you given to our dear Michonneau?" he continued, addressing the policemen. "A thousand or two of francs? I would have been worth more than that to you, my charming Venus du Pere la Chaise. If you had only warned me, I would have given you six thousand francs. But you did not suspect that, did you, my dear? Yes, I would willingly have given it for the sake of escaping a disagreeable voyage, and one which will cost me a good deal," he added, as they put the handcuffs on him. "But I shall soon be back," he continued. "There is not one of my brave fellows there, who would not put his very soul in peril for the sake of helping his good general, Trompe la Mort, to escape. Who among you," he continued, looking proudly around, "can boast of ten thousand brothers, or more, ready to do anything in the world for you? There is some good in me," he added, laying his hand upon his heart, "since I have never betrayed any one. Here, you old hag," addressing Mademoiselle Michonneau, "look at them; they are all afraid of me; but the sight of you fills them with

nothing but disgust. Go and take up your destiny!"

He paused and looked around once more. "Well!" he said, "what is the matter with you? Did you never see a convict before?" Then turning to the chief of police, he added:

"Tell me, minion of the executioner, governor of the Widow,* tell me, like a good fellow, whether it is really Fil de Soie who has betrayed me. I wouldn't like to make him suffer the penalty if he is not really the guilty one, you know."

Just then the agents, who had been examining and making an inventory of the contents of his room, returned and reported to the chief in a low tone. The verbal process was at an end.

"Gentlemen," said Collin, addressing the boarders, "they are going to take me away. You have made yourselves very agreeable to me during my sojourn here with you, and I beg you to accept my grateful thanks, and also my adieux. Permit me to send you some figs from Provence." He walked a few steps, and then turned to look at Rastignac.

"Adieu, Eugene," he said in a sweet and mournful voice, contrasting strangely with the abrupt, harsh tones which he had been using. "If I have troubled you, I have at least left you a devoted friend." In spite of his manacles he struck an attitude of defense, gave the word of command of a fencing-master, cried, "One, two!" and made an imaginary pass. "In case of evil, address yourself there. Man and money, you can dispose of all," he said, and he threw so much buffoonery into the last words, that they were incomprehensible to all save Rastignac.

When the house was entirely free of soldiers, policemen and agents, Sylvia, who was rubbing her mistress's temples with vinegar, looked up at the bewildered company.

"All the same," she said, "he was a good man."

These words broke the spell which seemed to rest upon all.

Suddenly they caught sight of Mademoiselle Michonneau, lank, dry and cold as a mummy, crouching by the stove, with her eyes lowered, as if the green shade which she wore were not sufficient to conceal their expression. The woman, always distasteful to them, was more so now than ever, and a unanimous murmur of disgust was heard on all sides. Mademoiselle Michonneau was perfectly well aware of it, but remained silent and motionless.

"I shall leave if that woman continues to dine with us," said Bianchon presently in a low voice.

Each one of the company, with the exception of Poiret, manifested his approval of this remark, and Bianchon, fortified by the general sympathy, walked up to the old ally of the obnoxious lady.

"You, Monsieur Poiret, who are the particular friend of Mademoiselle Michonneau," he said, "had better try to make her understand that she must leave the house at once."

"At once!" repeated Poiret, in astonishment.

Then he went up to the old lady and said a few words in her ear.

"But I have paid my board, and my money is as good as any one's!" she returned, throwing an angry glance around.

"That is no matter, we will club together and raise enough to pay it back to you," said Rastignac.

"You take Collin's part," she returned, with a venomous look at him; "and it is not difficult to know why."

Eugene started violently, as if he would throw himself upon her and strangle her, for her look contained a hidden meaning which threw a horrible light upon his soul.

But at his sudden movement there was a cry of, "Let her alone!" Eugene, checking himself, folded his arms and stood perfectly still.

"Come, let us finish with Mademoiselle Judas," said the painter, and turning to the landlady, he continued:

"Madame Vauquer, if you do not turn this woman out of the house, we will all

* A name given by convicts to the guillotine.

leave, every soul of us, and we will report everywhere that this house is a refuge for spiés and convicts. But if you do as we desire, we will stay and will hold our tongues about this little occurrence, which might have happened in the very best society, since it is so easy for rogues to disguise themselves nowadays."

At these words Madame Vauquer, suddenly and miraculously recovering from her fainting fit, stood up, crossed her arms, and looked full at the young man.

"My dear sir," she cried, "do you want to be the ruin of my house? There is Monsieur Vautrin. Oh, dear," she exclaimed, interrupting herself, "I can't help calling him by the name he bore as an honest man! Well, at all events, there is his room empty, and now you want me to have others to let, at a time when there is no demand for apartments."

"Gentlemen, let us take our hats and go and dine at Flicoteaux's," said Bianchon.

Madame Vauquer made a rapid mental calculation and then went to where Mademoiselle Michonneau was sitting.

"My dear friend," she said, "you would not be the ruin of my establishment, would you? You see to what an extremity these gentlemen have reduced me. Go up to your own room for this evening, there's a dear soul!"

"Not so fast!" cried two or three voices, "she must leave the house immediately."

"But the poor lady has not dined," said Poiret, in piteous tones.

"Let her dine somewhere else," was the implacable reply. "Out with her! Out with her!"

"Gentlemen," said Poiret, his courage rising with the emergency, "at least respect her sex."

"Spies have no sex," returned the painter.

"Gentlemen, this is indecent," said Poiret. "When people are turned out of doors, it is at least done legally. We have paid and we shall stay," and he put on his hat and seated himself beside Mademoiselle Michonneau, with whom Madame Vauquer was talking.

"Well, if you don't go, we shall," said Bianchon; and they all with one accord made a movement toward the door.

"Mademoiselle," cried Madame Vauquer, "just see what you are doing! I shall be ruined. You really cannot stay; they might, perhaps, resort to violence."

Mademoiselle Michonneau rose.

"She is going—"

"No, she isn't!"

"Yes, she is!"

"No, she isn't, either!"

These exclamations, and the hostile looks which accompanied them, had the desired effect of inducing the lady to depart, after several stipulations made in a low voice with her hostess.

"I shall go to Madame Buneaud's," she said, threateningly.

"Go where you like, mademoiselle," returned Madame Vauquer, to whom this choice of a rival's establishment was the last straw in her cup of bitterness. "Go where you like. Go to Madame Buneaud's if you want to; but I warn you that you will not have anything fit to eat or drink there!"

The boarders ranged themselves in two files in solemn silence; but as they looked at Poiret, so tenderly gazing upon Mademoiselle Michonneau, and so naïvely undecided whether to go with her or to remain where he was, they all burst out laughing.

"Ho! there! Poiret," cried the painter. "Whoop! halloo!"

And the Museum employé began to sing a verse of a well-known ballad:

> "Partant pour la Syrie,
> Le jeune et beau Dunois."

"Come, go ahead!" said Bianchon, "you know you are dying to. *Trahit sua quemque voluptas.*"

"Which, being freely translated, means, 'Each one follows his own bright, particular star!'" said another.

But Mademoiselle Michonneau took the decision of the matter into her own hands. She looked at Poiret, and made a gesture as if to take his arm, and the vacillating gallant, after one look in return, obediently rose and gave her his support.

Loud shouts of applause rang through the room:

"Bravo, Poiret!" "Good old Poiret!" "Apollo Poiret!" "Mars Poiret!" "Courageous Poiret!"

In the midst of this a messenger entered with a note for Madame Vauquer, who sunk feebly into her chair after reading it.

"I may as well burn down the house at once!" she said, forlornly. "Young Taillefer died at three o'clock. I am justly punished for having wished well to those people at the expense of that poor young man. Madame Couture and Victorine have sent for their effects, and are going to live with Monsieur Taillefer. He has engaged the widow as companion for his daughter. Four apartments vacant, and five boarders gone!" and she began to weep despairingly. "Misfortune has overtaken me," she sobbed.

At this moment a carriage stopped before the house.

"Another surprise," announced Sylvia, and Pere Goriot entered, rosy and beaming with happiness.

"Goriot in a hackney-coach!" exclaimed the boarders; "the end of the world has come!"

The good man went straight up to Eugene, who was standing apart from the others, and took him by the arm.

"Come," he said, joyfully.

"You don't know what has happened," returned Eugene. "Vautrin has turned out to be a convict, and they have just arrested him, and young Taillefer is dead."

"Well, what difference does that make?" replied Pere Goriot. "I am going to dine with my daughter at your house; do you hear? Come! she is waiting for you;" and he drew Rastignac so violently by the arm that he seemed actually to carry him out of the room.

"And now let us have dinner," exclaimed the painter; and they all drew up to the table.

"Everything is unlucky to-day," grumbled Sylvia; "even the mutton is spoiled. Well, you will have to eat it burned; I can't help it now."

Madame Vauquer was too much disheartened to say a word. She saw only ten people around her table, in place of eighteen; but they all tried to comfort her and cheer her up. The talk gradually drifted from the events of the day to duels, the galleys, justice, and laws which needed revision. Although there were only ten, they made noise enough for twenty; the habitual indifference of this egotistical world gradually got the upper hand once more, and even Madame Vauquer, before the meal was over, had in a great measure regained her equanimity and cheerfulness.

XVIII.

To Eugene the entire day had seemed like a dream. He felt as if he were not yet awake, when he found himself in the carriage with Pere Goriot, whose joyous tones and words sounded vague and unreal as they fell upon his stupefied ears.

"It was all finished this morning," he said; "and we three are to dine together—together! do you understand? It is four years since I have dined with Delphine—my little Delphine. She will be mine for a whole evening. We have been at your rooms all the morning, and I have worked with all my might. I helped to move the furniture. Oh, you don't know how pretty she is at table; she was so attentive to me! She kept saying: 'There, papa, eat this; it is very good,' and then of course I could not eat at all. Oh, it is such a long time since I have been as happy with her as we are going to be."

"Is the world turned upside down to-day?" asked Eugene.

"Upside down," assented Pere Goriot; "but it has never been so delicious. I see no one in the streets except those who look happy, and who are shaking hands and embracing each other; people look as joyful as if they were all going to dine with their daughters."

"I think I am just coming back to life," said Eugene.

"Come, driver!" called Pere Goriot, opening the front window; "go quicker.

I will give you a hundred sous if you will take us in ten minutes to the address I gave you." And at these words, the driver lashed his horses to their utmost speed.

"That driver scarcely makes us move," said the old man, impatiently.

"But where are you taking me?" asked Eugene.

"To your own house," replied Pere Goriot.

The carriage stopped in the Rue d'Artois.

The old man got out first, and tossed ten francs to the driver, like one who, beside himself with joy, takes no heed of what he does.

"Come, let us go up," he said to Rastignac, leading him through a court, and upstairs to the door of an apartment situated on the third floor, at the back of a new and attractive-looking house. There was no need to ring; Therese, Madame de Nucingen's maid, opened the door to them, and Eugene found himself in a charming bachelor's apartment, consisting of an antechamber, a little parlor, a bedroom, and a study looking out upon a garden. In the parlor, whose furnishing and decoration were pretty and graceful beyond comparison, he saw Delphine.

She rose from an easy-chair by the fireside, put her hand-screen upon the mantelpiece, and said to him, in a tenderly reproachful voice:

"So we had to go for you, since you would not understand!"

Therese left the room, and the student, taking Delphine in his arms, in a long, close embrace, fairly wept for joy. The contrast between the present time, and the painful and irritating scene through which he had passed earlier in the day, were too much for his nerves, and he was, for the moment, completely overwhelmed.

"I knew that he loved you," said Pere Goriot, in a low voice to his daughter, while Eugene sunk upon the armchair, unable to speak, or to understand how this stroke of a magician's wand had been accomplished.

"Now come and look," said Madame de Nucingen, taking his hand and leading him into the next room, which was beautifully furnished in the same exquisite taste.

"Now I will tell you what I want," said Pere Goriot, following them; "I want you to pay no attention to me, and I want you never to let me disturb you. I will go and come like a good spirit, who is felt, but not perceived. Well, Delphine, was I not right to say to you, 'There is a pretty apartment in the Rue d'Artois; let us furnish it for him?' You did not want to do it. Ah! I am the author of your happiness as well as of your being. Fathers ought always to give, in order to be happy. Always giving; that is what it is to be a father."

"What is that?" said Eugene.

"Yes, she did not want to do it. She was afraid of what people might say; as if the world ought to be weighed against happiness! Every woman—"

But Pere Goriot was talking to the empty air, for his daughter had drawn Eugene into the little study, whence the sound of a kiss was distinctly audible, lightly as it was given. This room was of a piece with the elegance of all the rest, in which nothing was wanting.

"Well," said Delphine finally, returning to the parlor, and seating herself at the table, "are you satisfied with the result of our efforts?"

"Only too well," he replied. "I appreciate this complete luxury, this realization of my most beautiful dreams, to the fullest extent. But I cannot accept all this from you, and I am still much too poor to—"

"Ah!" she interrupted; "then you are resisting me already;" and she pouted most bewitchingly.

Eugene had too solemnly examined himself that day, and had seen too plainly, in Vautrin's arrest, the depth of the abyss into which he had so nearly fallen, to yield to this caressing refutation of his generous ideas; and a deep melancholy stole over him.

"What!" said Madame de Nucingen; "do you refuse? Do you know what such a refusal means? You doubt the future, and you dare not bind yourself to me.

Are you then afraid that you will betray my affection? If you love me, and if I—love you, why do you hesitate before an insignificant obligation like this? If you knew the pleasure it has been to me, to prepare all this, you would not even hesitate, and you would beg my pardon. I had some of your money, and I have made good use of it; that is all. But if you do not love me, by all means do not accept it. My destiny hangs upon your word. Speak! Papa," she added, turning to her father after a pause, "tell him of some good reasons why he should accept this. Does he think I would be less careful of his honor than he would be himself?"

Pere Goriot's face was fixed in a smile of delight as he listened to this pretty quarrel; and he seemed to be in a trance of enjoyment, in which he was unable to speak.

"Child! you are only at the entrance of life," she continued, taking Eugene's hand; "you meet with a barrier which to most men would prove insurmountable, and when a woman's hand opens it for you, you draw back! But you are sure to succeed in time; you will make a brilliant fortune, for success is written on your brow. When that time comes, can you not then return to me what I lend to you to-day? In former ages, ladies used to give their knights armor, swords, casks, coats of mail, horses, in order that they might fight for them in the tournament. Well, Eugene, the things which I offer to you are the armor of to-day—the necessary weapons for him who means to succeed. That garret where you are lodged now is delightful indeed, if it is anything like papa's room! Come, shall we not dine? Do you want to grieve me? Won't you answer me?" she insisted, giving his hand a little shake. "Oh! papa, make him decide, or I shall go away and never see him again."

"I will make him decide," said Pere Goriot, coming out of his trance. "My dear Monsieur Eugene, you are thinking of borrowing money from the Jews, are you not?"

"I must, indeed," he replied.

"Good! I thought so!" said the old man, drawing a wornout old portemonnaie from his pocket. "Now look here! I have made a Jew of myself. I have paid all the bills, and here they are. You do not owe a centime for anything that is here. It did not cost an enormous sum, any way; at the most, five thousand francs. Now I will lend them to you. You will not refuse me, for I am not a woman. You may give me a memorandum of it on a little slip of paper, and pay me when you get ready."

Great tears stood in the eyes of both the young people, as they looked at each other in surprise, upon hearing these words. Rastignac could not speak, but he took the good old man's hand and pressed it warmly.

"Well! are you not my children?" said Goriot.

"But, my poor father," asked Madame de Nucingen, "how did you do it?"

"Ah! I'll tell you," he said. "When I had succeeded in getting you to decide to establish him near you, and when I saw you buying all these things, I said to myself, 'She will not have money enough.' The lawyer says that the suit to make your husband give up your fortune will last more than six months. So I sold my thirteen hundred and fifty pounds of income, and bought, with fifteen thousand francs, an annuity of twelve hundred francs, and with what remained of the capital I paid for your purchases, my children. For my part of the bargain, I have a room upstairs here for fifty ecus a year, I can live like a prince upon forty sous a day, and I shall have something left over, even then. I never wear out my clothes, so I shall not need any new ones; and for the last fortnight I have been chuckling over this, all to myself, and saying, 'Won't they be happy!' And are you not happy?"

"Oh, papa, papa!" cried Delphine, throwing herself upon her father, and covering him with kisses, letting her blonde hair caress his cheeks, and her warm tears fall upon his radiantly happy face.

"Dear papa," she said, "what a father you are! There is not another one like

you in all the world. Eugene loved you dearly already, and what will he feel now?"

"But, my children," said Goriot, who for ten years had not felt his daughter's heart against his own; "but, Delphine, you will make me die of joy; my poor heart will break. Come, Monsieur Eugene, this makes us already quits!" And the old man folded his daughter in such a wild and passionate embrace that she cried out, "Ah, you hurt me!"

"I hurt you!" he said, growing pale; and he looked at her with an expression of overwhelming sorrow. He kissed very softly the waist which his fingers had too rudely pressed, and said, looking up at her with a beseeching smile:

"No, it is not I who have hurt you; it is you who have hurt me with that cry;" and he kissed her once more, gently.

"I shall try to be worthy of it all," cried Eugene, looking with amazement at the inexhaustible devotion of the old man.

"Oh, my Eugene," said Madame de Nucingen, kissing him on the forehead; "that is a beautiful thing for you to say."

"He refused Mademoiselle Taillefer and her millions for your sake," said Pere Goriot. "Yes, she loved him dearly, and since her brother died, she is as rich as Crœsus."

"Oh, why did you tell that?" cried Rastignac.

"Eugene," said Delphine softly, "that is the only regret which this evening has brought me. Oh, I will love you dearly, and always!"

"This is the happiest day I have spent since you and your sister were married," said Pere Goriot. "The good God may send me all the suffering He pleases now, and I will say: 'In February of this year, I was happier, for one moment, than most men are in their whole lives.' Look at my little darling," he continued. "Is she not beautiful? Did you ever see many women with such a pretty color and such dear little dimples? No, I thought not. Well, when your love makes her life happy, she will be a thousand times more beautiful still. Oh, my dear neighbor," he added, "I could willingly go to hell, if you wanted my place in Paradise."

"Poor papa!" said Delphine.

"If you knew, my child," he said, rising and going to her, taking her head in his hands and dropping a kiss among the soft twists of her hair, "how very happy you could make me! Come and see me sometimes; I shall be up there, and you will have only a step further to go. Promise me this!"

"Yes, dear father."

"Once more."

"Yes, my good father."

"There, that will do," he said. "I should make you say it a hundred times, if you would only do it. And now let us dine."

The evening was spent in trivial chat, and Pere Goriot showed himself not the least foolish of the three: he lay down at his daughter's feet and kissed them; he looked for a long time into her eyes; he rubbed his head against her dress, and committed the same follies that a young and ardent lover would have done.

"Do you see?" said Delphine to Eugene; "when my father is with us, he monopolizes everything. It may sometimes be very annoying."

Eugene, who had been guilty of several absurd throbs of jealousy during the evening, could not but secretly agree with her; but he did not reply.

"And when," he said, looking around the room, "will this be ready for occupation? May I stay here to-night?"

"No; but you may come and dine with me to-morrow," she replied. "To-morrow is one of the Italian opera nights."

"I shall go, and sit in the pit," said Pere Goriot.

It was midnight, and Madame de Nucingen's carriage was waiting. Pere Goriot and the student returned to the Maison Vauquer, talking enthusiastically of Delphine all the way. They found Madame Vauquer sitting by her stove, with Sylvia and Christopher on either hand. She was like Marius among the ruins of Carthage, and was bemoaning the state of affairs with Sylvia, while awaiting the return of her two remaining boarders.

"There are only three cups of coffee to be made to-morrow morning, Sylvia," she said mournfully. "Alas! is not this deserted house enough to break one's heart! What is life without my boarders? Nothing at all. Here is my house, but there are no people in it. What have I done to deserve all this trouble? And we have laid in beans and potatoes enough for twenty persons. To think of policemen in my house! We shall have nothing but potatoes to eat. I shall discharge Christopher."

The Savoyard, who had been asleep, suddenly roused at the sound of his name, and answered:

"Madame?"

"Poor fellow, he is like a house dog," said Sylvia.

"It is the dull season, when everybody is settled," continued the widow. "Where shall I get any more boarders? I shall go out of my mind! And that witch of a Michonneau, to have taken Poiret away from me! What can she have done to the man to make him follow her like a puppy?"

"Ah!" said Sylvia, shaking her head, "these old ladies have sly ways of their own."

"And this poor Monsieur Vautrin, of whom they have made a convict," resumed the worthy lady. "Well, Sylvia, it is beyond me! I can't believe it yet. A man like him, who paid regularly, and never disputed anything."

"And who was so generous!" said Christopher.

"There is some mistake," observed Sylvia.

"I am afraid not," replied Madame Vauquer. "He acknowledged it himself. And to think that all these things happened in my house, in a neighborhood where there is scarcely even a cat stirring. Now, we saw Louis XVI. when he had his little accident, and we saw the emperor fall, get up, and fall again, and all that was in the order of possible things; but there ought not to be any opportunities for such changes in a boarding-house. One can do without kings, but one must eat; and when an honest woman like me gets a good dinner ready, unless the end of the world should come—But that is what it is; it is the end of the world!"

"And to think that Mademoiselle Michonneau, who brought all this trouble upon you, is going to get from it, they say, a thousand francs," said Sylvia.

"Don't speak of it! She is an old wretch!" returned Madame Vauquer. "And she is going to Madame Buneaud's, into the bargain! I believe she is bad enough for anything; stealing, murdering, or any other crime. She ought to go to prison instead of this poor, dear man—"

Just then Eugene and Pere Goriot rang the bell.

"Ah! there are my two faithful ones," said the widow with a sigh.

The two faithful ones, who had almost forgotten the disasters which had befallen their abiding-place, walked in and unceremoniously announced to their hostess that they were going to live henceforth in the Chaussée d'Antin.

"Ah, Sylvia!" said the widow, "this is the last straw. Gentlemen, you have given me my death-blow. This day has made me ten years older. Upon my word, I shall go crazy! What shall I do with all those beans? Ah, well, if I am left alone, you shall leave to-morrow, Christopher! Good-night, gentlemen."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Eugene.

"Everybody has left her," replied Sylvia, "and the trouble has gone to her head. Hark! I think I hear her weeping. It will do her good to cry a little: this is the first time she has done it since I have lived with her."

The next day Madame Vauquer was more like herself. She was afflicted, as a woman should be who had lost all her boarders, but she no longer gave way unrestrainedly to her feelings. As a lover would gaze upon the place from which his beloved mistress had lately departed, so she looked at her empty table. Eugene tried to console her by telling her that Bianchon, whose term

finished in a few days, would doubtless come to replace him: that the Museum clerk had often expressed a desire to have Madame Couture's apartment, and that in a few days she would probably have as many as ever.

"May the Lord hear you, my dear sir!" she said. "But misfortune has come upon this house, and, mark my words, before ten days there will be a death here. See if there is not!" and she looked lugubriously around the dining-room.

"Who will it be?" she added, in a sepulchral tone.

"It is a good thing that we are going, if that is the case," said Eugene in a low tone to Pere Goriot.

"Madame," said Sylvia, coming into the room and speaking in a frightened tone, "it is three days since I have seen Mistigris."

"Ah well! if my cat is dead, if he has left us, I—"

But the poor widow could not finish; and clasping her hands she sunk back in her armchair completely prostrated by this terrible omen.

XIX.

On the next day at noon, Eugene received a letter bearing the Beauseant arms. It contained an invitation for Monsieur and Madame de Nucingen to a grand ball at the house of the vicomtesse, and to it was appended a little note for Eugene.

"I thought," it said, "that it would please you to be able to be the bearer of this invitation to Madame de Nucingen, and therefore I send it to you, with the assurance that I shall be charmed to make the acquaintance of Madame de Restaud's sister. Bring her with you to the ball, and do not allow her to monopolize all your affection, for you owe me some, in return for all that I bear you.

"Vicomtesse de Beauseant."

"Well!" said Eugene to himself, as he reread the note, "she tells me pretty plainly that she does not care to receive the Baron de Nucingen!" and he immediately set off for Delphine's house, happy that he had been able to procure the pleasure for her.

When he arrived there he was informed that Madame de Nucingen was at her bath, and he therefore waited in her pretty little boudoir, where everything seemed to breathe of her presence, until he was summoned to her. At length Therese came to him.

"Madame is in her own room," she said.

He found Delphine lying back in her armchair by the fire-place, fresh and fragrant as a flower.

"Well," she said, "here you are," and she smiled softly upon him.

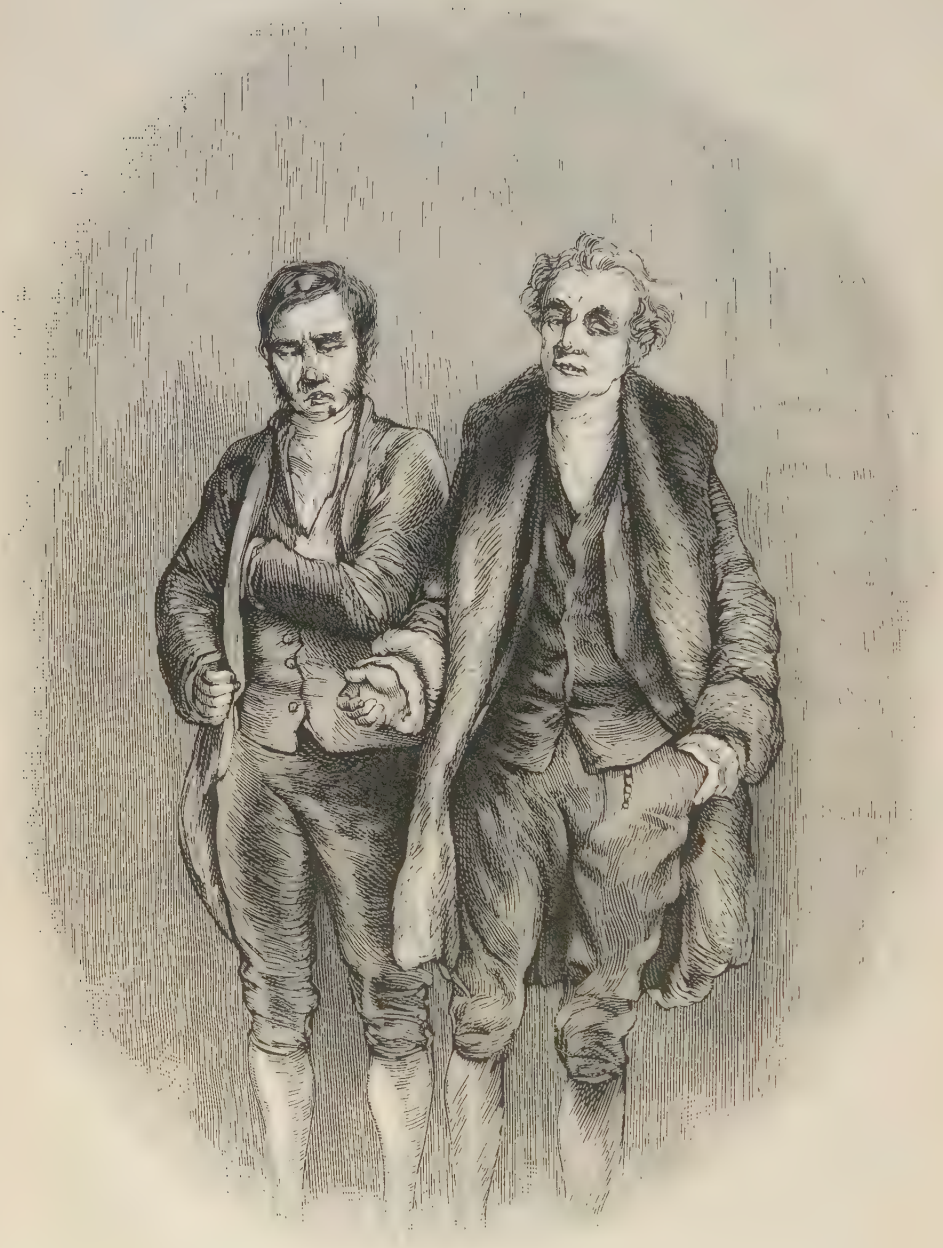
"Guess what I have brought you," said Eugene, seating himself near her, and kissing her hand.

Madame de Nucingen's face grew brilliant with joy as she read the invitation. She turned to Eugene with moist eyes, and threw both her arms around his neck in a delirium of gratified vanity.

"And it is to you," she said, "that I owe this happiness; yes, it is more than a mere triumph of self-love, since you have obtained it for me. Until now no one has been willing to introduce me into the world of the Faubourg Saint Germain; perhaps you think me light and frivolous for being so much pleased; but you ought not to blame me, since I care more for it now than ever before, because it introduces me to the world where you belong."

"Does it not look to you," said Eugene, "as if Madame de Beauseant did not expect Monsieur de Nucingen to come to her ball?"

"Yes," she said, returning the letter to Eugene. "Women in her position have a perfect genius for impertinence. But no matter; I shall go just the same. My sister is to be there; I happen to know that she is preparing a charming dress. Eugene," she added, in a low tone, "she is going there for the pur-



VAUTRIN IN TWO OF HIS DISGUISES.

"'The terrible' was no longer terrible under such an exterior."

pose of trying to allay some terrible suspicions. You do not know the rumors which are afloat concerning her. Nucingen told me this very morning that they were talking about her at the club without the slightest reserve. They say that Monsieur de Trailles has signed bills of exchange to the amount of a hundred thousand francs, that they are nearly all due, and that rather than let him be prosecuted for them my sister will sell her diamonds to a Jew; those beautiful diamonds which you must have seen upon her, and which belonged to Monsieur de Restaud's mother. Well, for two days it has been a much-discussed question whether or no she has really done this, and it is my opinion that Anastasie is having this beautiful and expensive dress made in order to appear in it, ornamented with her diamonds, and thus allay the rumors which have arisen. She will try to be the cynosure of all eyes; but I do not propose to allow her to outdo me if I can help it. She has always wanted to keep me down, and has never shown any gratitude for all I have done for her and for all the money that I have given her when she needed it. But don't let us talk any more about the world and its ingratitude; to-day I want to be wholly happy."

When Eugene finally took leave of her, she said:

"I have a strange presentiment that my happiness will not last, and that I shall have to atone for it by some frightful catastrophe. I suppose you will call me superstitious, but the feeling is very strong in me."

"Silly child!" said Eugene, with playful chiding.

"Ah, it is I who am the child this time!" she answered, laughing; and he left her to return to the Maison Vauquer full of dreams of the happy life that was to commence for him on the morrow, when he was to leave that detested place forever.

The next day Goriot and Rastignac were all ready to go, and only waiting for a porter, when toward noon a carriage stopped in the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, and Madame de Nucingen, having descended from it and inquired of Sylvia if her father were still there, hastily mounted the stairs.

Eugene was in his room, although Pere Goriot was not aware of the fact. He had, at breakfast, asked Pere Goriot to see about moving their effects to the Rue d'Artois, saying that he would join him there about four o'clock. But while the old man was out looking for porters, Eugene having gone to the law-school and answered to his name, had returned hurriedly to the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve, in order to pay his landlady what he owed her before Pere Goriot—who in his blind devotion would undoubtedly have taken this expense upon himself—should have an opportunity to do so. Madame Vauquer happened to be out; and Eugene, going up to his room to see if he had forgotten anything, was rewarded for his trouble by finding his note to Vautrin, which he had carelessly thrown into his table-drawer on the day that he had redeemed it. Having no fire, he was just about to tear it in little pieces, when, recognizing Delphine's voice, he stopped to avoid making any noise, and waited, thinking that she would have no secrets which he might not share. And at the first words which were spoken the conversation between father and daughter became so interesting to him that he did not hesitate to listen to what followed.

"Oh, papa!" she said, "if it had only occurred to you to inquire into the state of my fortune before I was ruined! Is it safe for us to speak here?"

"Yes; the house is empty," replied Pere Goriot in an altered voice.

"What is the matter with you, papa?" demanded Madame de Nucingen.

"I feel," replied the old man, "as if you had given me a blow on the head. May God forgive you, my child! You do not know how I love you; if you did, you would not have abruptly said a thing like that to me, especially if the case is not desperate. What has happened of so much importance that you had to come here to see me, when in a little while we shall be in the Rue d'Artois?"

"Oh, papa! what could I do? I am nearly crazy. Your lawyer has brought to light things which in any case could not have remained hidden much longer. Your former business experience has become necessary to us, and I have hastened to you like a drowning man clinging to a plank. When Monsieur Derville tried to bring Monsieur de Nucingen to an account, he threatened him with a lawsuit if he did not restore my money; and Nucingen came to me this morning to ask me if I desired his ruin and my own. I answered that I did not know anything about the matter; that I had a fortune, and ought to be in possession of it; and that everything was in the hands of my lawyer; that I was entirely ignorant of the whole thing, and incapable of understanding it. Was not that what you advised me to say?"

"Good!" replied Pere Goriot.

"Well," continued Delphine, "he then told me all about his affairs. It seems he has put all my capital as well as his own into some speculations which are as yet scarcely under way, and which have required enormous sums. If I force him to give up my dowry he will be ruined; if, on the other hand, I am willing to wait a year, he promises, upon his honor, to return to me my fortune doubled or trebled, and to put me in complete possession of it. My dear father, he meant what he said, and I was frightened. He promised me, as a proof of his good faith, to allow Monsieur Derville, as often as I wished, to examine into things and see that my interests were being protected. In short, he put himself completely in my power, bound hand and foot. He asked that he might for two years longer have the conduct of the house, and begged me to spend no more upon myself than he allowed me. He proved to me that it had been almost more than he could do to preserve appearances; that he had retrenched his own expenses in every way, and that the strictest economy would be necessary in order to bring him through these speculations without injury to his credit. I abused him, and cast doubt upon everything in order to learn all he had to tell me; he showed me his books, and even wept before me. I never saw a man so completely broken down, and I really pitied him."

"And you believed all that nonsense?" cried Pere Goriot. "He is a fine actor, that is all. I have had business dealings with Germans before now; they are usually good, honest people, but when one of them does turn out a rogue and a charlatan, he is worse than any other. Your husband is deceiving you. He feels himself hard pressed and so he invents this story for your benefit. He is as cunning as he is false. No, no! I do not propose to go to my grave leaving my daughters stripped of all their possessions. I haven't lost all my business talent yet. He says he has put his property into some speculative undertaking: very well, he must have notes and agreements representing his claims. Let him show them and settle with you. We will choose the best investments for your money, and it shall be all in your own name, and for your own use. Does the man take us for fools? Does he think that I would for a moment put up with the idea of leaving you without any fortune? I could not bear the thought of it; and if it were indeed true, it would kill me. What! have I worked like a slave for forty years, endured reverses, and denied myself all my life for you, my darlings, who made all work and all burdens light for me, only to see my life and my fortune vanishing in smoke! By everything that is most sacred in heaven and earth, we will sift this thing to the bottom! I can neither sleep nor eat until we have proved that your entire fortune is safe. You have Monsieur Derville for your lawyer; fortunately he is an honest man; and by all that is holy, you will keep your fifty thousand pounds to the end of your days, or I will make a fine row in Paris! If the lower courts victimize us, we will carry our case to the higher ones. To know that you were safe and happy as far as money is concerned, would make my mind easy, and soothe all my troubles. Money is life; money does everything. Delphine, do not make a single concession, not even a quarter of a

sou, to this great beast of an Alsatian, who has made you so unhappy. If he really needs your assistance we will make our own terms with him, and he will have to march straight! Oh! my head is crazy and my brain is burning. My Delphine reduced to poverty! Oh, my darling little child! Where are my gloves? Come, I will go this minute and examine the books, the correspondence, the whole business. I cannot be calm again until it is proved that your fortune is in no danger, and that everything is safe once more."

"My dear father, I beseech you to be prudent. If you show the least desire for vengeance, or betray any hostile intentions, I am lost. My husband knows you; and it has seemed very natural to him that, instigated by you, I should get uneasy about my fortune; but I tell you he holds it in his own hands, and means to keep it there. He is a man who would not scruple to run away with all the capital, if necessary, and leave us here without anything—the rascal! He knows well that I would not dishonor myself by prosecuting him. He is at once strong and weak. I have thought it all out, and have come to the conclusion that, if we resort to extremities, I am ruined."

"Is he such a rascal?" asked the old man.

"Well, yes, papa," she said, sinking upon a chair and beginning to weep. "I did not confess it before, in order to spare you the grief of having married me to such a man. Manners and conscience, soul and body, agree perfectly: he is frightful; I hate and despise him; he is thoroughly vile, and I no longer have the least respect for him."

"But there are laws!" cried Pere Goriot. "There is a Place de Grève* for people like him; and I would willingly guillotine him myself if there were no other executioner."

"No, papa," she replied; "there are no laws which can touch him. Listen to his language, stripped of all the circumlocutions with which he surrounded it: 'Either you lose everything, and are ruined, without a sou to your name, or you leave me free to carry on my undertakings.' Is not that clear enough? He knows that he has me in his power; I must consent to this infamous and dishonest association, or be ruined. His present undertakings are thoroughly fraudulent; I have understood that much; and I have also understood that in order to be able, if necessary, to pay out enormous sums, he has sent considerable property to Amsterdam, London, Naples, and Vienna. How should we ever be able to lay our hands upon all that?"

Eugene heard the heavy sound of Pere Goriot's knees, as he fell on his chamber floor.

"My God!" he said; "what have I done? My daughter is in the power of this wretch, and he can take everything, if he chooses! Pardon me, my child!"

"Yes," said Delphine, "if I have fallen into an abyss, it is possibly your fault. Girls know so little, when they marry! What do they know of the world of business, or of men and their customs? Fathers ought to look out for them. Dear papa, I do not mean to reproach you; forgive me for what I have just said. In this matter, the fault was entirely mine. Nay, do not cry, papa," she entreated, kissing her father's forehead.

"Do not you cry, either, my little Delphine," he returned. "Let me wipe away the tears from your eyes with my kisses. Here! my head is all right again now, and I will go and straighten out this business skein which your husband has tangled."

"No, no, let me do it; I will know better how to manage him than you would. Only come to-morrow and examine his books and his affairs. Monsieur Derville knows nothing about commerce. No, upon second thoughts, you need not come to-morrow. I do not wish to excite myself, for Madame de Beauseant's ball is on the next night, and I want to look fresh and beautiful enough to do honor to my dear Eugene. Come! I want to go and see his room."

* Public square in Paris, where criminals were executed.

XX.

JUST then a carriage stopped, and Madame de Restaud's voice was heard, inquiring if her father were within. Eugene, who was on the point of throwing himself on the bed and feigning sleep, was thus relieved from a most embarrassing dilemma.

"Ah! papa, have you heard about Anastasie?" asked Delphine, recognizing her sister's voice. "They say that there are queer things going on at her house also."

"Oh!" moaned Pere Goriot; "it will be the death of me. My poor head will never survive so much trouble."

"Good-day, papa," said the countess, entering. "Oh! are you here, Delphine?" and she seemed rather embarrassed at her sister's presence.

"How do you do, Nasie?" said the baroness. "Are you surprised to see me here? I see my father every day."

"Since when, pray?" returned her sister.

"If you came oftener, you would find out," replied Delphine, scornfully.

"Oh, do not tease me, Delphine," said her sister, piteously. "I am so unhappy. I am lost, papa! This time I am lost indeed!"

"What is it, Nasie?" cried Pere Goriot. "Tell us everything, my child. She grows pale! Delphine, come, help her; be good to her; I will love you better than ever, if that were possible, if you will be kind to her."

"My poor Nasie," said Delphine, making her sister sit down, "speak to us. You can tell us everything freely, for we are the two people in the world who love you well enough to pardon everything. Family affections are the most enduring after all," and she held smelling-salts to the nostrils of her sister, who soon revived.

"It will kill me!" said Pere Goriot. "Here," he added, stirring his fire of turfs, "come nearer. I am so cold. What is the matter with you, Nasie? Tell quickly, for you are killing me with this suspense."

"Well," said the poor lady at last; "my husband knows everything. Do you remember, papa, that bill of exchange that was redeemed for Maxime some time ago? Alas! that was not the first one; I had already paid large sums. About the beginning of January I noticed that Monsieur de Trailles seemed very unhappy. He did not say anything, but it is always easy enough for a woman to see when there is anything troubling a man who is dear to her. And then again, he was more tender and affectionate toward me than ever before; he has told me since that he was taking leave of me in his thoughts, before blowing out his brains. But finally I begged and entreated him until he told me what was the matter; he confessed that he owed a hundred thousand francs! Oh! papa; a hundred thousand francs! I was nearly crazy. You did not have them, for I had stripped you of everything—"

"No," said Pere Goriot, "I could not have given them to you, unless I had stolen them. But I would have done that; I will do it now."

At these intensely mournful words, this cry of paternal agony at being reduced to utter powerlessness, the two sisters were silent. What egotism could remain unshaken at this despairing utterance, which, like a stone thrown over a precipice, revealed the depth of the gulf below?

"I got them by disposing of something which did not belong to me," said the countess, bursting into tears.

Delphine, deeply moved, put her head upon her sister's head and wept in sympathy.

"Then it is all true?" she said.

Anastasie hung her head, and Delphine, kissing her fondly, and holding her close in her arms, said to her:

"Here you will always be loved without being judged."

"My angels," said Pere Goriot, feebly, "why did you wait until misfortune drew you together, before you became reconciled?"

At length the comtesse, encouraged by these testimonials of love and sympathy, resumed her story.

"To save Maxime's life," she said, "and to save my happiness as well, I took to the usurer, that hard-hearted Monsieur Gobseck, the family diamonds which Monsieur de Restaud values so highly; his, mine—all—I sold. Sold; do you understand? He was saved; but I am lost, for Restaud found out everything."

"Where? how? Let me kill him," cried Pere Goriot.

"Yesterday," she continued, "I was summoned to his room. I went. 'Anastasie!' he said—and the minute I heard his voice I guessed that he knew all—'where are your diamonds?' 'They are in my rooms,' I said. 'No,' he returned, 'they are there, on my bureau,' and he showed me the jewel-box which he had covered with his handkerchief. 'You know where they came from?' he asked; and I fell on my knees, weeping, and beseeching him to kill me outright."

"You said that!" exclaimed Pere Goriot. "By all that is most sacred, any one who harms either of you, while I am alive, may be sure that I will kill him by inches! Yes, I will cut him up in little pieces, like—"

Pere Goriot's voice failed him, and he was silent.

"And then, my dear," continued the countess, "he made a most terrible demand. Heaven preserve any woman from hearing things like those he said to me!"

"I will assassinate him," said Pere Goriot, calmly. "It is a pity that he has only one life; I should like to kill him twice."

"He made me swear to obey him in what he should ask of me," continued the comtesse. "I swore it, and he then said that, in order to protect himself and his children, he should require me to sign away my property to him."

"Do not sign it!" cried Pere Goriot. "Never sign that! Aha! Monsieur Restaud, you think you can make my daughter unhappy, and then do as you please; but I am here, and you will find me in your path! Nasie, do not worry; I will steal his son—who is also my grandson—and I will carry him away and never bring him back until the monster yields. I will say to him: 'The matter rests between us two; give my daughter back her fortune, and let her do exactly as she pleases, and I will restore your son to you.'"

"My father!"

"Yes, I am your father; this fine gentleman will find that he cannot abuse my daughter. Oh! I do not know what is in my veins! It is like liquid fire; it is the blood of a tiger, and I would like to devour both these husbands. Oh, my children, is your life like that? It kills me! What will become of you when I am gone? The life of a father ought to last as long as that of his children. Oh, Lord! how badly hast Thou arranged this world! And yet they say that Thou hast Thyself a son!

"My darlings, is it only when you are unhappy that you seek me? Do you bring to me only your tears? Ah! well, it is a proof that you love me. Come, come and weep here; my heart is large, and can receive all your tears. Would that I could bear your troubles, and suffer for you! Ah! when you were little, you were so happy!"

"It was the happiest time of our lives," said Delphine mournfully.

"Papa, that is not all!" said Anastasie; and the old man started violently. "The diamonds," she continued, "did not bring a hundred thousand francs, and Maxime is prosecuted. There are only twelve thousand francs to be paid. He has promised me to be prudent, and to gamble no more. There is nothing in the world left to me except his love, and I have sacrificed too much for him already to let that escape me now. Oh! only let him be free and honored, so that he may have a chance to make a position for himself in the world. Everything will be lost if he be arrested!"

"I haven't got it, Nasie," said the poor old man; "I have nothing, nothing any more. It is the end of everything; the world is surely crumbling away! Ah! I have still my silver shoe-buckles, and six silver dishes, the first that I ever had! Besides that, I have only twelve hundred francs of annuity."

"And what have you done with your income?" demanded his daughter.

"I have sold it, keeping this little bit of a sum for my own needs. I had to use twelve thousand francs to furnish a suite of rooms for Delphine."

"At your house, Delphine?" asked her sister.

"Oh, what difference does that make?" returned Pere Goriot; "the money is spent."

"I can guess," said the countess; "it was for Monsieur de Rastignac. Ah! Delphine, stop while you can. You see what I have come to."

"My dear," replied Delphine, "Monsieur de Rastignac is a young man who is incapable of ruining his friends, like some people."

"Thanks, Delphine! I expected more sympathy than that from you, in my trouble; but you never loved me."

"Yes, she does love you, Nasie," exclaimed Pere Goriot; "she was telling me so just now. We were talking of you, and she agreed with me that you were beautiful, and that she was only pretty."

"She!" repeated the comtesse; "she is as cold as ice."

"And supposing I am," said Delphine, reddening; "how have you behaved toward me? You have disowned me, you have caused the doors of all the houses that I have wished to enter to be closed upon me, and you have never omitted the slightest opportunity to annoy and injure me. Have I come, like you, to wrest from our poor father his whole fortune, a thousand francs at a time, and to reduce him to this pitiful state? This is your work, sister. I have come to see my father as often as possible. I have never closed my doors against him, and I do not come to fawn upon him when I have need of him. I did not even know that he had used those twelve thousand francs for me. My credit is good, and you know it! And when my father has made me presents, it has not been because I have begged for them."

"You have been more fortunate than I," said her sister, vindictively; "Monsieur de Marsay was rich; and you have always been as sordid as gold itself. Adieu; I have neither sister, nor—"

"Hush, Nasie!" cried Pere Goriot.

"There is nobody like a sister for saying disagreeable things," said Delphine. "Nobody else believes them! You are a monster."

"My children, my children, hush! or I shall fall dead before you," said the poor old father.

"I forgive you, Nasie," continued Delphine, "because you are unhappy. But to say this to me, just when I felt willing to do anything in the world to help you! Well, it is all of a piece with the way you have treated me for the last nine years."

"My children, my dear children!" cried their father; "embrace each other, like the angels that you are."

"No, let me alone," exclaimed the comtesse, whom Goriot had taken by the arm, shaking him off impatiently. "She has less pity for me than my husband himself. One would think that she was a pattern of all the virtues!"

"I would much rather have it said of me that I owed money to Monsieur de Marsay, than to confess that Monsieur de Trailles had cost me more than two hundred thousand francs," said Madame de Nucingen.

"Delphine!" cried the comtesse, taking a step toward her.

"I speak truth, and you only slander me," replied the baroness, coldly.

"Delphine!" said her sister; "you are a—"

But Pere Goriot, darting forward, stopped the comtesse from finishing her sentence, by putting his hand over her mouth.

"Oh, papa! what in the world have you been handling this morning?" exclaimed Anastasie.

"Ah! yes, I was wrong!" answered the poor old man, wiping his hands upon his clothes, and only too happy that he had turned upon himself his daughter's anger; "but you see, I did not expect you, and I have been getting ready to move. Ah!" he continued, seating himself, "you have broken my heart. I shall die, my children! My head burns as if it were

on fire. Come, be good children, and love each other! You will kill me. Delphine, Nasie, come! you were both right and both wrong. See, Delphine," he continued, turning upon her his eyes, swimming in tears; "she needs twelve thousand francs; let us try and get them for her. Don't look at each other like that!" He fell on his knees before Delphine. "Ask her pardon, to please me," he whispered, "she is more unhappy than you, you know."

"My poor Nasie," said Delphine, fairly frightened by the wild expression which grief imparted to her father's face; "I was wrong; kiss me."

"Ah, that is like balm to my heart," cried Pere Goriot. "But where shall we find the twelve thousand francs? Would it do any good if I were to propose myself as a substitute?"

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed the two daughters, coming close to him, "no, no!"

"God will reward you for that thought; we could not recompense it with our lives; could we, Nasie?" continued Delphine.

"And then, my poor father, it would not do much good," said the comtesse.

"Is one's very blood of no use then?" cried the poor old man, despairingly. "I will do anything for any one who will save you, Nasie! I will kill a man, if he wants me to. I will be like Vautrin, I will go to the galleys! I—" He stopped suddenly, as if a thunderbolt had struck him. "No use!" he said, tearing his hair. "If I only knew where to go to steal anything; but it is so hard to find a good chance. Oh! I ought to die; there is nothing left for me but to die. I am not good for anything; I am not worthy of being a father. She needs something; she is in want! and I, miserable wretch that I am, I have nothing. Ah! you bought yourself an annuity, you old rascal, and yet you have children; you no longer love them. Die! die like the dog that you are! Yes, I am even lower than a dog; a dog would not have done such a thing! Oh, my head! It is bursting!"

"Papa, papa!" cried his two daughters, holding him back from striking his head against the wall; "do be reasonable."

He sobbed aloud. Eugene, horrified, took Vautrin's bill of exchange, which he held in his hand, and which bore a larger sum on its face than was required; he altered the figures, made a regular bill of exchange of it for twelve thousand francs, payable to Goriot, and entered the room.

"Here is all your money, madame," he said, handing the paper to the comtesse. "I was sleeping, when I was awakened by your voices, and thus learned for how much I was indebted to Monsieur Goriot. Here is the sum for your use; I will faithfully redeem the note."

The comtesse stood motionless, holding the paper.

"Delphine," she said, pale and trembling with anger and rage, "as God is my witness, I could pardon you everything but this! Is it possible that Monsieur de Rastignac was there, and that you knew it! You had the meanness to avenge yourself upon me by allowing me to give up to him my secrets, my honor, my very life. Go! you are no longer anything to me. I hate you. I will do you all the harm I possibly can. I—" but anger choked her words, and she was silent.

"But he is my son, your friend, your savior!" cried Pere Goriot. "Embrace him, Nasie! Here, I will embrace him," he added, pressing Eugene to him with a sort of fury. "Oh! my child," he exclaimed, "I will be more than a father to you if that be possible. Would that I were God, that I might lay the universe at your feet! Won't you kiss him, Nasie! He is more than a man; he is an angel, an angel indeed!"

"Let her alone, papa," said Delphine; "she is mad just now."

"Mad! mad! and what are you?" demanded Madame de Restaud.

"My children, I shall die if you keep on," cried the old man, dropping upon his bed as if he had been shot. "They are killing me!" he muttered.

The comtesse looked at Eugene, who remained motionless, stunned by the violence of the scene.

"Monsieur?" she said, interrogatively,

without paying the least attention to her father, whose waistcoat Delphine was rapidly unfastening.

"Madame, I will pay and I will hold my tongue," he replied, without waiting for her question.

"You have killed papa, Nasie!" said Delphine, pointing out the fainting old man to her; but the latter immediately left the room without a word.

"I forgive her heartily," said the good man, opening his eyes, "she is in a frightful situation and one that would turn a better head than hers. Console the poor girl; be good to her: promise this to your poor father, who is dying," he added, pressing Delphine's hand.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked, frightened by his words and manner.

"Nothing, nothing at all," he replied; "it will pass off. There is something pressing upon my forehead, but it is nothing but a headache. Poor Nasie, what a future is before her!"

Just then the comtesse re-entered the room, and threw herself on her knees before the bed.

"Forgive me!" she cried.

"Come," replied Pere Goriot, "if you talk like that you will make me worse."

"Monsieur," said the comtesse to Rastignac, her eyes filled with tears, "grief has made me unjust. Will you be as a brother to me?" and she held out her hand to him.

"Nasie," said Delphine, putting her arms around her, "dear little Nasie, let us forget it all."

"No," she replied, "I will always remember it most gratefully."

"My darlings," exclaimed Pere Goriot, "you have drawn back the dark curtain that was before my eyes; your words give me new life. Kiss each other, now. Well, Nasie, will the bill of exchange save you?"

"I hope so," she replied. "See here, papa! will you please sign it?"

"Well! how stupid I am to have forgotten that," he said. "But I felt ill just then. Nasie, don't bear me any grudge; send and let me know that your troubles are over. But no! I will go myself and see you. On second thought, however, I believe I will not, for if I were to see your husband I think I should kill him on the spot. As for taking your property away from you, we will see about that! Now go quickly, my child, and make Maxime be more prudent next time."

Eugene was stupefied by what had passed.

"Poor Anastasie was always passionate," said Delphine; "but she is very good-hearted."

"She came back to get that indorsement," whispered Eugene to her.

"Do you think so?" she asked.

"I would rather not believe it," he replied; "but if I were you, I should be rather suspicious of her," and he raised his eyes, as if confiding to Heaven the thoughts which he dared not express.

"Yes," she replied, "she always was a little actress, and papa never fails to be deceived by her wiles."

"How do you feel now, my good Pere Goriot?" inquired Rastignac of the old man.

"I feel as if I could go to sleep," he replied.

Eugene helped him to get to bed, and then, after he had fallen asleep, Delphine left him.

"I will see you this evening at the opera," she said to Eugene, "and you can tell me then how he is. To-morrow you must change your quarters. And now let me see your room. Oh! what a horrible place," she added, entering; "it is even worse than my father's. Eugene, you behaved well just now, and I would love you even better than before, if that were possible; but, if you want to make your own fortune, let me advise you not to throw twelve thousand francs out of the window again in that style. The Comte de Trailles is a gambler, although my sister will never acknowledge it, and—"

But she was interrupted by a groan from Pere Goriot, which made them both return to his room; as they approached him they heard these words: "They are not happy!"

The mournful accents so touched his daughter's heart that she bent over him and kissed him on the forehead.

He opened his eyes saying: "It is Delphine!"

"Well, how are you?" she asked.

"Very well," he replied. "Don't be uneasy; I am going out soon. Oh, my children, be happy!"

XXI.

EUGENE went with Delphine to her own house; but, uneasy at the state in which he had left Pere Goriot, he refused to dine with her, and returned to the Maison Vauquer. He found Pere Goriot in the dining-room, just about to take his place at the table. Bianchon had placed himself so that he had a full view of the old man's face, and when he saw him take up his piece of bread and feel of it, to judge of the flour of which it was made, the medical student shook his head sadly, noting the mechanical and unconscious manner in which the familiar act was performed.

"Come and sit by me, Bianchon," called Eugene, and the young man moved his place all the more willingly that the change would bring him nearer to the old man.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Eugene.

"Unless I am very much mistaken he is done for!" replied the other. "Something extraordinary must have happened to him, for he looks to me as if he were just on the verge of serous apoplexy. Although the lower part of his face is calm enough, the upper features are drawn toward the forehead in spite of him—see? And then the eyes are in that peculiar condition which denotes serum in the brain. Don't they look to you as if they were full of a fine dust? But to-morrow morning I can tell better."

"Is there any help for it?" asked Eugene.

"None at all," replied his friend. "Perhaps death might be delayed a little by causing a reaction to set in toward the extremities; but unless the symptoms have ceased by to-morrow evening the poor man is past help. Do you know what has caused this attack? He must have received a violent mental shock, beneath which he has succumbed."

"Yes, I know," said Rastignac, recalling the pitiless way in which his daughters had bruised the old man's heart, and he thought:

"Delphine, at least, loves her father."

That evening, at the opera, Rastignac spoke to Madame de Nucingen about her father's critical state, endeavoring to do it in a way which should not alarm her.

"Oh, you must not be uneasy," she said, at his first words; "my father is very strong, although we did agitate him a little this morning. But our fortunes are at stake. Do you know how long he is likely to be sick? I think I could not live, if your affection did not make me insensible to all this trouble. I have now only a single fear, and that is the dread of losing the love which makes life seem to me worth living. Beyond that sentiment everything is indifferent to me. I care for nothing else in the world. You are everything to me. If my wealth gives me happiness, it is because through it I can perhaps give you pleasure. I cannot tell why, but the fact remains that I love you better than I love my father; my whole life is bound up in you. And yet I am not an unnatural daughter. I love my father. Who would not love as good a father as ours? Could I help it if he did not foresee the consequences of our unfortunate marriages? Why did he not prevent them? Was it not his place to reflect for us? Now, it is true, he suffers as much as we do; but how can we help that? It would be impossible for us to comfort him, for our very resignation would grieve him more than our reproaches and complaints would harm him. There are certain situations in life which contain nothing but bitterness."

Eugene was speechless, moved to the heart by the words in which she had confessed her love for him. But she at length asked abruptly:

"What are you thinking about?"

"I was still listening to your words," he replied. "Until now I had thought that I loved you better than you loved me."

She smiled and then sought to hide her gratification and happiness under the veil of ordinary conversation; for she had never before listened to the thrilling vibrations of a genuine love, and she felt that she could not bear more just then.

"Eugene," she said, changing the subject, "do you know what is going on? All Paris is going to-morrow to Madame de Beauseant's. The Rochefides and the Marquis d'Adjuda have agreed not to say anything about it beforehand, but it is a fact nevertheless that the king is to sign the marriage contract to-morrow, and your poor cousin knows nothing of it yet. She cannot now avoid receiving her guests, and the marquis will not be at her ball. Every one is talking of nothing but this."

"And yet the world mocks at such an infamy, and takes a share in it? Don't you know that it will kill Madame de Beauseant?"

"Oh, no!" said Delphine, smiling. "You do not know the stuff these women are made of. But all Paris is going to her ball, and I shall be there too, thanks to you!"

"Perhaps," said Rastignac, "it is one of those false reports, of which the city is always full."

"We shall see to-morrow," she returned, sagely.

Eugene passed that night in his new apartment and slept late the next morning. Delphine came to take breakfast with him, and the two young people were so happy in each other's society that they almost forgot Pere Goriot. However, about four o'clock they remembered him, and the happiness that he anticipated in living in this new abode. Eugene, observing that the old man ought to be promptly removed to his new quarters if he was going to be sick, left Delphine and hurried to the Maison Vauquer. Neither Pere Goriot nor Bianchon was at the table.

"Well," said the painter, as Eugene entered: "Pere Goriot is about done for. One of his daughters, the Comtesse de Restaud, came to see him, and when he tried to go out afterward he had a severe attack. Society is about to be deprived of one of its brightest ornaments."

Rastignac darted toward the staircase.

"Here! Monsieur Eugene!"

"Monsieur Eugene, madame is calling you," cried Sylvia.

"Monsieur," said the widow, "you and Monsieur Goriot were to have left my house on the 15th of February. It is now the 18th, and I shall have to charge you each for another month's board. But if you will guarantee his board to me, your word will be sufficient."

"Why? can you not trust him?"

"Trust!" she repeated scornfully. "If the man was dead his daughters would not pay me a sou, and everything that he has got up there would not be worth ten francs. He carried off his last pieces of silver plate this morning. I don't know why."

"I will be responsible for everything," said Eugene, shivering with horror and dreading he knew not what.

He went up to Pere Goriot's room. He found the old man lying on his bed and Bianchon standing near him.

"How do you do, papa?" said Eugene.

The good man smiled gently, as he turned his glassy eyes toward him. "How is she?" he said.

"Very well, and how are you?"

"Pretty well," he replied.

"Don't tire him," said Bianchon, taking Eugene by the arm and drawing him to one side.

"Well?" said Rastignac, inquiringly.

"He cannot be saved except by a miracle," replied Bianchon. "Congestion has set in, and I have applied mustard plasters. Luckily they seem to be taking effect, so far."

"Can he be moved?"

"Impossible. He must be left here and kept as free from agitation and as quiet as possible."

"My good fellow," said Eugene, "we will take care of him ourselves."

"I have already called the head doctor of our hospital."

"Well?"

"He can tell better to-morrow evening. He has promised to come late in the day. Unfortunately, this silly man here did a very imprudent thing to-day, which he absolutely refuses to explain. He is as obstinate as a mule, and when I speak to him, he pretends not to hear and goes to sleep in order not to reply; or else, if his eyes are open, he begins to moan. He went out early and went into Paris on foot, nobody knows where. He carried with him everything of value which he possessed, and did something or other which was entirely too much for him. One of his daughters had been here."

"The comtesse?" asked Eugene, "a tall brunette, with bright eyes and slender figure?"

"Yes."

"Leave me alone with him for a moment," said Rastignac. "I think he will tell me all about it."

"Then I will go and get my dinner while you are here. But try not to agitate him too much. There is still a little hope."

"Don't be uneasy."

"They will have such a nice time to-morrow," said Pere Goriot, when he was left alone with Eugene. "They are going to a great ball."

"What have you been doing this morning, papa, to make you so sick to-night that you have to stay in bed?" asked Eugene.

"Something that was perfectly right," replied the old man, complacently.

"Anastasie was here?" asked Rastignac.

"Yes," replied Pere Goriot.

"Well? come, do not conceal anything from me. What did she want now?"

"Ah!" he replied, gathering all his strength for the effort of speaking, "she was so unhappy! Since that affair of the diamonds she has not had a sou. She had ordered for this ball an embroidered dress which must be extremely becoming to her. Her dressmaker, the wretch, would not give her credit and her maid lent her a thousand francs on account. Poor Nasie! It makes my heart bleed to think that she has come to that! But the maid, seeing that Monsieur de Restaud no longer allowed his wife any money, was afraid of losing what she had advanced, so she went to the dressmaker and made arrangements with her not to deliver the dress until the thousand francs were paid. Now the ball takes place to-morrow and the dress is all done. Nasie was in despair and she came to see if she could borrow my silver plate, in order to pawn it. Her husband wants her to go to this ball, in order to show everybody the diamonds which they are all saying she has sold. Can she say to this monster of a man: 'I owe a thousand francs; pay them for me'? No, indeed! I saw very plainly that she could not. Delphine will be there in a superb toilet, and of course Anastasie ought to look as well as her younger sister. And she is so unhappy, poor child! I was so ashamed yesterday not to have had those twelve thousand francs for her that I would have given the rest of my miserable life to make up to her for it. You see, I had had strength to bear everything, but that last failure broke my heart.

"Well, I dressed myself and went out; I sold the dishes and the silver buckles for six hundred francs, and then I pledged my annuity for a year to old Gobseck, for four hundred francs paid down. Bah! I can eat bread; that was enough for me when I was young, and it ought to do now. At all events, my Nasie will have a fine evening. She will look so pretty! I have the thousand-franc note there under my pillow. It warms me to have something under my head which will give pleasure to poor Nasie. She can turn that wicked Victoire out of doors. Did any one ever see such a servant, not to be willing to trust her mistress? To-morrow I shall be well, and Nasie will come at ten o'clock. I don't want them to think me ill, for they would stay and take care of me, instead of going to the ball. Nasie will kiss me as she used to do when she was a child, and her caresses will cure me. Well! is it not much bet-

ter to spend a thousand francs on my Nasie, my cure-all, than on a doctor? I will at least be a comfort to her in her unhappiness; and now my conscience will be easier about having bought that annuity. She is at the bottom of an abyss; and I, alas! am no longer strong enough to draw her out. I am going to take up business again. I shall go to Odessa to buy grain. It is worth three times less there than it costs us here. Oh, I have a fine scheme. If it is against the law to import these grains in their natural state, they can be made up into food and then imported! Ha! ha! I thought it all out this morning. There is a great profit to be made in starch, for one thing."

"He is crazy!" thought Eugene, looking at the old man. Then he added aloud: "Come, you must be quiet now, and not talk any more."

He went down to dinner as soon as Bianchon came up; and they passed the night in watching by turns the old man, occupying themselves, the one with his medical books, and the other by writing to his mother and sisters. The next day the sick man's symptoms were, according to Bianchon, a little more favorable; but he still needed constant care, of which the two students were alone capable. He had to have applications of mustard, foot-baths, and various other remedies which required their united devotion and strength.

Madame de Restaud did not come at all; she sent for the money by a messenger.

"I thought she would have come herself; but it is just as well; she might have been uneasy about me," said the father, apparently satisfied.

At seven o'clock in the evening, Therese brought Eugene a letter from Delphine.

"What has happened to you?" it said. "Am I neglected so soon? You have shown yourself, during our short acquaintance, incapable of a breach of faith. Remember that I expect you to take me to Madame de Beauseant's ball this evening. Monsieur d'Adjuda's contract was really signed at court this morning, and the poor vicomtesse did not know anything about it until two o'clock. Is it not horrible for people to go and gaze upon her grief, to see how well she will bear it? I certainly should not go, if I had ever been to her house before; but this is probably the last time that she will receive, and all my efforts will have been wasted, unless I embrace this opportunity. My situation is very different from that of others. Besides, I am going for your sake also. I expect you. If you are not here in two hours, I do not think I shall ever forgive you."

Rastignac took up a pen, and wrote in answer:

"I am waiting for a physician, to know how long your father will live. He is dying. I will bring word to you; and I fear the worst. You will judge for yourself whether you ought to go to the ball.

"Tenderly yours,

"_____."

The doctor came at half past eight, and, without giving a favorable opinion, thought that death would not immediately take place, but that he might rally and regain reason and consciousness several times before the end.

"It would be much better for him to die at once," were the last words of the physician, as he went away.

Eugene left the old man to Bianchon's care, while he went to carry the sad news to Madame de Nucingen, not dreaming that she would hesitate about giving up the evening's entertainment.

"Tell her that she must amuse herself just the same," cried Pere Goriot, who had appeared to be in a stupor, raising himself up in bed as Eugene left the room.

The young man presented himself to Delphine, overwhelmed with grief, to find her almost ready to go. She had only to put on her ball-dress.

"What! are you not yet dressed?" she said.

"But your father—" he began.

"Always my father!" she cried impa-

tiently, interrupting him. "It is not for you to teach me what I owe my father. I have known him a long time. Not another word, Eugene! I shall not listen to you until you have made your toilet. Therese has got everything ready for you at your rooms, and my carriage is ready to take you there and bring you back again. We can talk about my father on our way to the ball. We ought to go early, for if we get into the line of carriages, we shall be lucky if we get there by eleven o'clock."

"Madame!" he said, making one more attempt; but she again interrupted him.

"Go! not a word!" she insisted, running into her boudoir in search of a piece of lace.

"Oh, do go, Monsieur Eugene!" said Therese, "you will make madame angry;" and she fairly pushed him from the room.

He went away to dress, burdened by sad and discouraging thoughts of this heartless world into which he had entered. He thought of the purity and love which reigned in his own family; but he dared not remonstrate with Delphine upon her course of conduct. He instinctively read her heart, and he knew that she was capable of walking over the dead body of her father, if necessary, to go to this ball. But he had neither the courage to reason with her, nor the strength to leave her. "She would never forgive me if I thwarted her in this," he thought; and he began to seek excuses for her; she did not know the state in which her father was lying, and the old man himself would have been the first to send her away from him to the ball, if she had gone to see him. And then the physician's words occurred to him, and he pleased himself with the thought that Pere Goriot was in no imminent danger, after all, and that Delphine was not so much to blame as it had at first seemed to him; and he returned to her in a calmer frame of mind than he had left her.

"And now," said she, when he stood before her in ball costume, "tell me how my father is."

"Very ill indeed," he replied; "if you wish to give me a proof of your love, you will go with me to see him."

"Well—yes," she said, "but after the ball. My dear Eugene, I beg of you to be kind, and not to preach to me."

They set out; Eugene was very silent, and at length she said to him:

"What is the matter with you?"

"I am listening to your father's death-rattle," he replied, in a tone of grief. And he related to her, with the fiery eloquence of youth, the course which Madame de Restaud had adopted through vanity, the mortal crisis which the last act of devotion on the part of her father had caused, and the fatal price at which the embroidered dress had been procured.

Delphine wept, but suddenly dried her tears, fearing for the effect upon her complexion.

"I will go and care for my father. I will never leave his bedside," she said.

"That is my own Delphine; that is as it should be," cried Rastignac, embracing her.

XXII.

FIVE hundred carriages stood in the neighborhood of the Beauseant mansion, and on either side of the brilliantly lighted gateway strutted a gendarme. The fashionable world of Paris had flocked thither so unanimously, and had been so eager to see this great lady in the moment of her fall that the apartments, situated on the ground-floor of the house, were already full to overflowing when Madame de Nucingen and Rastignac arrived. Since the time when the whole court rushed to gaze upon the great mademoiselle, from whom Louis XIV. had torn her lover, no affair of the kind had attracted so much attention as that of Madame de Beauseant. The most beautiful women of Paris made the rooms dazzling with their toilets and their smiles. The most distinguished men of the realm—embassadors, ministers, and illustrious individuals of all kinds, brilliant with crosses and orders—pressed around the vicomtesse. The orchestra re-

sounded beneath the gilded ceilings of the palatial residence, which was like a desert to its mistress to-night.

Madame de Beauseant was standing near the door of the first salon, to receive her so-called friends. Dressed in white, with no ornament in her abundant hair, she appeared calm and dignified, affecting neither grief, nor pride, nor false gayety. No one could read her soul; she seemed like a marble Niobe. Her smile, to some of her intimate friends, appeared to have a touch of mockery; but she seemed just as usual in every way, and behaved so exactly as she used when happiness ornamented her with its rays, that the most heartless could not but admire her, as the young Romans used to applaud the gladiator who could smile as he was dying. The world seemed to be assembled to bid farewell to one of its sovereigns.

"I feared you would not come," she said to Rastignac as she greeted him.

"Madame," he replied, moved by her tone of reproach, "I have come latest to remain latest."

"That is well," she said, taking his hand. "You are perhaps the only one here in whom I can confide. My friend, when you love a woman, love her always; never abandon her."

She took Rastignac's arm, and led him to a small room apart from the rest.

"Go to the marquis," she said. "Jacques, my valet-de-chambre, will show you where to find him, and will give you a letter for him. I have sent for all my correspondence, and I believe he will give it to you. If you succeed in getting my letters, go up to my own room with them; and my servants will let me know that you are there."

She rose to receive the Duchesse de Langeais, her most intimate friend, who had just arrived. Rastignac went out and called for the Marquis d'Adjuda at the Rochefides', where he had been passing the evening, and where he found him. The marquis accompanied him to his own house, and handed him a box, saying: "They are all there." He seemed inclined to add something more; perhaps to question Eugene on the events of the ball, and the appearance of the vicomtesse, perhaps to confess that he was weary already of his approaching marriage, even before it was consummated. But whatever it was, he proudly restrained himself, and only said, as he affectionately and sadly pressed Eugene's hand:

"Say nothing to her of me, my dear fellow." And then he made him a sign of dismissal.

Eugene returned to the vicomtesse's house, and was shown to her own room, where he saw hasty preparations for departure. He seated himself near the fire, and was soon lost in melancholy reverie, with his eyes fixed upon the little cedar box which he had brought.

"My friend," said the vicomtesse, entering, and laying her hand upon Rastignac's shoulder. She was weeping, and her hands were trembling. Seeing the box, she took it from him, placed it upon the fire, and stood watching it as it burned.

"They have come promptly, while death comes so slowly," she said. She laid her finger upon Eugene's mouth, stopping the answer which he was about to make.

"Hush, my friend!" she said gently. And then she continued:

"I shall never see Paris and the world again. At five o'clock in the morning I start for Normandy, to bury myself in its depths. I have been busy since three o'clock this afternoon, making my preparations and attending to my affairs; I had no one whom I could send to—" She stopped a moment. "He was sure to be found at—" She stopped again, overcome with grief, and unable to pronounce the words. At length she resumed:

"I counted upon you this evening for this last service. And now I want to give you a pledge of my friendship; I shall often think of you, who have seemed to me so good and noble, so open and candid, in a world where these qualities are only too rare; and I want you to think sometimes of me. Here!" she added, looking about her, "here is the little casket where I keep my gloves. Whenever I have taken them out of it, to go to ball or theater, I have been light-hearted and happy, and only pleas-

ant thoughts are connected with it. Accept it from me. I will have it taken to your rooms—Rue d'Artois. Madame de Nucingen is very beautiful this evening; love her faithfully. If we never see each other again, do not forget that you, who have been so good to me, have my very best wishes always. And now let us go down. I would not like them to think that I had been weeping; I have all my life before me for that, and no one will mind how many tears I shed. Let me look once more at this room."

She paused; then, after having for a moment hidden her eyes with her hand, she wiped them, bathed them in fresh water, and took the young student's arm.

"Come now," she said.

Eugene was nearly overcome with emotion at the sight of this grief which was so nobly repressed; but he restrained himself for her sake, and they made the tour of the rooms together.

He soon perceived the two sisters, Madame de Restaud and Madame de Nucingen. The comtesse was magnificent in her diamonds, whose sparkles must have been like so many burning points for her, since she wore the jewels for the last time. The sight of the two sisters did not tend to remove Rastignac's sadness, and beneath the sparkles of their gems he seemed to see the pallet upon which their poor father was lying. The vicomtesse noticed his melancholy, but mistook its meaning, and withdrew her arm from his.

"Go! do not let me cost you a moment of pleasure," she said, gently.

Eugene was soon claimed by Delphine, who was happy in the sensation she produced, and anxious to share her triumphs with him.

"How do you think Nasie looks?" she asked him.

"She looks, to me," he replied gravely, "as though she were adorned at the expense of her poor father's life."

Toward four o'clock in the morning the crowds began to thin out, and soon afterward the music ceased. Before long the Duchesse de Langeais and Rastignac were the only occupants of the grand salon. The vicomtesse, expecting to find only the young student, came to them there, after having said adieu to Monsieur de Beauseant, who had gone tranquilly to bed afterward, remarking as she left him:

"You are wrong, my dear, to go and bury yourself at your age; you had much better stay with us."

When she saw the duchesse, Madame de Beauseant could not repress a start of surprise.

"I have guessed your secret, Clara," said Madame de Langeais. "You are going away, never to return; but you will not go until you have listened to me, and until we understand each other."

She took her friend by the arm and led her into the adjoining room; and there, looking at her with tears in her eyes, she pressed her in her arms, and kissed her cheeks.

"I cannot coldly let you go away, dear," she said. "I want you to know that you can count upon me as upon yourself. You have been magnificent this evening; and I would like to prove myself worthy of being your friend. I have often been hateful to you; will you forgive me for it? I wish I could take back every word of mine that has wounded you. The same grief has united our souls, and I do not know which of us is the more unhappy. Monsieur de Montriveau was not here this evening; do you understand? Those who have seen you to-night, Clara, will never forget you. As for me, I shall make one more effort, and if that fails, I shall go into a convent. Where are you going?"

"To Normandy, to Courcelles, to love and to pray, until the day when it shall please God to take me out of the world," she replied.

Then, seeing Rastignac, she called him to her; he came, and kneeling before her, he took her hand and kissed it.

"Antoinette," resumed the vicomtesse, "farewell! May you be happy! As for you," she added, turning to Eugene, "you are already happy. You are young, and have not yet lost your faith in all things."

Rastignac went away about five o'clock, after having seen Madame de Beauseant

safely into her carriage, and after having received her last farewell, watered with the tears which proved that people in the highest walks of life are not without the griefs and troubles common to humanity, although some try to make us believe it.

Eugene returned on foot to the Maison Vauquer in the dampness and the cold. His education was finished.

"We shall not be able to save poor Pere Goriot," said Bianchon to him, as he entered the old man's room.

"My friend," said Eugene, after having looked at the sleeping sick man, "go and follow out the modest destiny to which you have limited your desires. As for me, I am in hell, and I must stay there. Whatever evil any one tells you of the world, believe it! There is no Juvenal capable of painting its horrors, covered as they are with gold and precious stones."

The next day, Rastignac was awakened about two o'clock in the afternoon by Bianchon, who, being obliged to go out, begged him to watch by Pere Goriot, who had grown much worse during the morning.

"He has not two days to live, and possibly not six hours," said the medical student, "and yet we cannot cease fighting against the disease. And he ought to have things which are expensive. We will be his nurses, willingly; but as for me, I have not a single sou. I have turned his pockets inside out, and searched through his cupboards; but the result is zero. When he came to his senses for a moment, I questioned him, and he told me that he had not so much as a single liard. How much have you got?"

"I have just twenty francs," replied Rastignac; "but I can go and stake them, and perhaps I shall win."

"But supposing you lose?"

"Then I will go and ask for money from his sons-in-law and his daughters."

"And if they do not give it to you?" continued Bianchon. "But the most pressing need is not for money, but for a boiling hot mustard-plaster which shall reach from his feet half-way up his thighs. You know how to apply it, and Christopher will help you. I will go to the apothecary's, and tell him that I will be responsible for all the medicines which we get from him. It is such a pity that he could not have been moved to our hospital; he would have been so much better off. Come, let me install you as nurse, and you must not leave him until I come back."

The two young men went back to the room where the old man was lying, and Eugene was much shocked at the change which had taken place in his appearance.

"Well, papa?" he said, leaning over the low bed.

Goriot raised his dull eyes to Eugene's face, and looked at him attentively without recognizing him. The sight was too much for the young man, and his eyes were wet with sudden tears.

"Bianchon," he said, "ought there not to be curtains at the windows?"

"No," replied the other; "atmospheric conditions no longer affect him. It would be only too fortunate if he felt either warmth or cold. But we must have a fire, to prepare drinks and other things. I will send you some fagots until we can get wood; yesterday and last night I burned yours, and all the turfs that the poor man had. It was so damp, the water dropped from the walls. I could hardly get it dry here. Christopher swept it out, for it was disgustingly dirty."

"His daughters ought to assist him," said Eugene, with a groan.

"If he wants anything to drink, you can give him this," continued the medical student, pointing to a white cup. "If he seems inclined to talk a great deal, and is even a little bit out of his head, don't check him. It is not a bad sign; but in that case you must send Christopher to the hospital for me, and either my friend or I will come. This morning, while you were asleep, we had a long consultation with three celebrated physicians. These gentlemen detected unusual and interesting symptoms, and we want to follow the progress of the disease, in order to gain light upon several scientific points. One of these gentlemen maintains that the pressure of the *serum* has particular

effects, according as it bears more upon one organ than another. Now if he should speak, I want you to listen carefully, in order to find out the drift of his ideas; whether his words are the efforts of memory, or of judgment; whether he is inclined to reason, or to dwell upon the past; in short, try to notice enough to give us an exact report. It is possible that he may remain unconscious until the end; these maladies have so many ways of manifesting themselves! If the trouble is here," he continued, putting his finger on the back part of the old man's head, "the brain may partially recover its faculties, and death will be slower in coming. Then again the water may be diverted from the brain entirely, and follow some course which can only be determined by an autopsy. There is at the Incurables' at present an imbecile old man who had this trouble, and the serosity followed the vertebral column; he suffers horribly, but he lives."

"Are they enjoying themselves?" asked Pere Goriot, recognizing Eugene at that moment.

"Oh, he thinks of nothing but his daughters," said Bianchon. "He said to me more than a hundred times last night, 'They are dancing. She has her dress.' He called them by their names, and fairly brought tears to my eyes by the tones of his voice as he said: 'Delphine! My little Delphine! Nasie!' Upon my word, it was enough to break a man's heart!"

"Delphine," said the old man, "she is there, is she not? I knew she would come!" And his eyes wandered to the walls and the door.

"I am going down to tell Sylvia to prepare the plasters," exclaimed Bianchon; "it is a good time to apply them."

Rastignac was left alone with the old man; he seated himself at the foot of the bed, with his eyes fixed on the invalid.

"Madame de Beauseant has gone away," he thought, "and this one is dying. Great souls cannot remain long in this pitiful, mean, superficial world;" and thoughts of the fête which he had just attended rose to his mind, in contrast with his present surroundings.

Suddenly Bianchon reappeared.

"See here, Eugene," he said, "I have just seen our chief physician, and I came running back to tell you what he said. If the patient manifests symptoms of reason, and speaks, lay him upon a long plaster which will extend from the nape of his neck to his loins, and send for us immediately."

"Bianchon, you are a good fellow," said Eugene.

"Oh! a scientific fact is involved," replied the student, with all the ardor of a neophyte.

"Then," said Eugene, "I am the only one whose care for the old man is given through affection for him."

"If you had seen me this morning, you would not say that," returned Bianchon, without being in the least offended. "Practiced physicians see only the disease; but I still see the patient, my dear boy."

And he went away again, leaving Eugene in momentary expectation of a crisis which was not long in arriving.

XXIII.

"My dear boy, is it you?" said Pere Goriot, recognizing Eugene.

"Are you better?" asked the student, taking his hand.

"Yes; my head has felt as if it was in a vise, but it is better now," he replied. "Have you seen my daughters? They will soon be here, for they will fly to me as soon as they know that I am sick. They took such good care of me in the Rue de la Jussienne. I wish my room was fit to receive them. There has been a young man here who has burned up all my turfs."

"I hear Christopher coming up the stairs," said Eugene, "with some wood that this same young man has sent you."

"Good! but how shall I pay for the wood? I have not a sou left. I have given away all, everything. I am a pau-

per. But was the embroidered dress beautiful? (Oh! my head!) Thanks, Christopher; God will repay you; I cannot, for I have nothing left."

"I will pay you well, both you and Sylvia," whispered Eugene.

"My daughters told you that they would come, did they not, Christopher?" continued the old man. "Go to them once more; I will give you a hundred sous. Tell them that I do not feel well, and that I want to see them and embrace them once more before I die. Tell them that, but don't frighten them,"

Christopher, at a sign from Rastignac, left the room.

"They will come," continued the sick man. "I know them; if I were to die, how grieved Delphine would be. And Nasie also. I don't want to die, for I don't want to grieve them. To die, my good Eugene, is to see them no more. Yonder, where I am going, I should get so weary. For a father, hell is where his children are not, and I have already known what that is, since they were married. My paradise was in the Rue de la Jussienne. If I went to heaven, perhaps I could sometimes return to earth, to be near them in spirit. I have heard of such things. Do you suppose it is true? I seem to see them now, as they were in the Rue de la Jussienne. They would come down in the morning. 'Good-morning, papa,' they would say. I would take them on my knees, and we would have a frolic; and then they would caress me so prettily. We breakfasted and dined together every day, and they were indeed my children, then. In those days they knew nothing of the world, and they loved me dearly. Oh! why could they not have remained little children always! (Ah! my head will burst!) If I only had their hands in mine now, I should feel well once more. Do you believe they will come? Christopher is so stupid; I ought to have gone myself. You went to the ball yesterday; tell me about them. They did not know I was sick, did they? Poor little things, they would not have danced if they had known. Oh, I must not be sick! They need me too much. Their fortunes are in danger; and then, think of the husbands they have! Cure me! cure me! (Oh, this pain!) You see, I must get well, because they need money, and I know how to get it. I am going to make starches at Odessa. I am a cunning fellow, and I shall make millions as it. (Oh! this dreadful pain!)"

Pere Goriot was silent for a moment, apparently gathering all his strength to bear his suffering.

"If they were here, I would not complain," he said. "Why should I complain?"

He fell into a light stupor, which lasted a long time. Christopher returned while he was in this state, and Rastignac, believing him to be asleep, allowed the man to speak in his ordinary voice as he gave an account of the result of his mission.

"Monsieur," he said, "I went first to Madame la Comtesse's, but found it impossible to see her, since she was engaged with her husband. When I insisted, Monsieur de Restaud himself came out to me, and said: 'Monsieur Goriot is dying, is he? Well, it is the best thing he can do with himself. I need Madame de Restaud at present, we are occupied with important business; when we have finished, she will go.' He seemed to be very angry. I was just going, when madame herself came in by another door, and said to me: 'Christopher, tell my father that I am engaged in important business with my husband just now, and cannot leave; but as soon as we have finished, I will go.'

"As for Madame la Baronne, I could neither see her, nor get a message to her. Her maid said to me: 'Madame did not return from the ball until a quarter past five, and she is now sleeping; if I were to wake her, she would be very angry. When she rings, I will tell her that her father is worse. There is always time enough to tell bad news!' I begged in vain. I even asked to speak with Monsieur le Baron, but he had gone out."

"And so neither of his daughters would come," cried Eugene. "I shall write to them."

"Neither will come," repeated the old man sitting up in bed. "They are busy or asleep, and they will not come. I knew

it. One never knows what children are, until one is dying. Ah! my friend, never marry, never have children! You give them life, and they give you death. You bring them into the world, and they drive you out of it. No, they will not come. I have known it for ten years, but I would never believe it."

His eyes filled with tears, which rested on the reddened rims, but did not fall.

"Ah! if I were rich," he continued; "if I had kept my fortune, if I had not given it all away to them, they would come to me, and cover my cheeks with their kisses! I should live in a hotel, I should have fine rooms, and servants, and my own fire; and they and their husbands and their children would be overwhelmed with grief. I should have all that; but now, I have nothing. Money gives everything, even a daughter's love. Oh, my money! where is it? If I had a fortune to leave them, they would take such good care of me; I should hear them and see them. Ah! my dear boy, my only real child, I would rather have my abandonment and my misery than that! When an unfortunate man is beloved, he is at least sure that the affection is not assumed. But no! I would rather be rich, for then I should see them. Who knows, though? They have hearts of stone, both of them. I loved them too much for them to care about me. A father ought always to be rich. Wretched children! this is a worthy ending to their treatment of me for the last ten years. If you could only have seen how tenderly attentive they were to me, when they were first married! (Oh! this horrible pain!) I had just given them each nearly eight hundred thousand francs, and of course neither they nor their husbands could be rude to me. They invited me to their houses, and it was: 'My good father, here; my dear father, there.' There was a place always ready for me at their table; and I dined with their husbands, who treated me with the greatest consideration. You see, they thought I had something left. And why should they not think so? I had never told them anything about my affairs. A man who gives eight hundred thousand francs to his daughters is a man to be treated with respect. And they were so attentive to me; but it was all for the sake of my money. Human nature is not to be admired; I have found that out. They took me in their carriage to the play, and I spent the evening with them whenever I liked. They openly called themselves my daughters, and acknowledged me as their father.

"But I was not as much at home at their table as elsewhere; I was treated with the respect due to my money, but I was always afraid of doing some awkward thing, and I never knew what to say. (Oh! my head!) My dear Eugene, my sufferings at this moment are horrible, but they are nothing to what I felt at the first glance by which Anastasie made me understand that I had humiliated her by some stupid remark. I was nearly crazy, and I felt as if I were *de trop* in the world. The next day, I went to Delphine's for consolation, and there I did some foolish thing or other which made her angry. I thought I should go mad. For a week I did not know what to do; I dared not go to see them for fear of their reproaches. And so there I was, turned out of my own daughters' houses! O my God! since Thou knowest the misery and suffering which I have endured; since Thou hast counted every blow which my heart has received, during these years which have whitened my hair and made a miserable old man of me; why dost Thou make me suffer still? I have already fully expiated my sin of loving them too well. They are avenged for my affection. I loved them as a gambler loves his play; my daughters were my only vice. If they wanted something, some ornament, their maids would tell me of it, and I would give it to them for the sake of being made welcome. But they gave me little lessons on behavior just the same. They began to blush for me. That is the thanks a man gets for bringing up his children well. But, at my age, I was too old to go to school. (Oh! this pain is horrible! If the doctors would only open my head, I should suffer less.) My daugh-

ters! Anastasie! Delphine! I must see them. Send policemen for them, and bring them to me by force! Justice and nature are on my side. The country will perish, if parents can thus be trodden under foot. Society and the world will crumble away, if children do not love their fathers. Oh! only to see them, to hear them, no matter what they say, if I can only hear their voices, especially Delphine's, it would quiet this pain. But tell them, if they do come, not to look upon me coldly, as they have done. Ah! my good friend, you do not know what it is to see a look change all at once from gold to gray lead. Since the day their eyes ceased to beam upon me, the world has been like winter to me. I have lived to be humiliated and insulted. I loved them so much that I swallowed every affront they offered me. The idea of a father being obliged to hide himself, in order to look upon his daughters! I have given my life-time to them, and they will not give me an hour to-day! I am thirsty and hungry, and my heart is burning up, but they will not come to relieve my agony. I am dying: I feel it. Do they know what it is to walk over a father's corpse? As there is a God in heaven, a father's sorrows will be avenged! Oh! they will come—they must come! Come, my darlings, come and give me a kiss; give one last kiss to your father, who will pray to God for you, who will tell Him that you have been good children, who will plead for you. After all, you are innocent. They are innocent, my friend! Tell everybody so, that no one may be disturbed on my account. It is all my fault, for I taught them to trample upon me. I liked it, and it was nobody's business. God would be unjust if He condemned them because of me. I did not know how to behave; and it was very stupid of me to abdicate all my rights. Why! the best of souls would have yielded, in such a case, just as they did. I am a miserable wretch, and I am justly punished. I alone am to blame for my daughters' behavior, for I have spoiled them. They long for pleasure now, as they used to long for *bonbons*. I always allowed them to gratify their whims when they were children. At fifteen, they had their own carriage; I denied them nothing. I alone am guilty, but guilty only through love.

"Oh, they are coming! they must come! The law will force them to come to their dying father; the law is on my side. Write to them that I have millions to leave them. It is true, upon my honor, for I am going to Odessa, to make Italian pastries there. I know the process. There are, according to my project, millions to be made, and nobody has thought of it. The things will not be spoiled in the transportation, as wheat or flour would be. Starch! there are millions to be made in that alone! It will not be telling them a falsehood to say that there will be millions, and even if avarice alone brings them to me, I would rather have them come thus, than not at all. I want my daughters! they belong to me! they are mine!" and the poor old man sat up in bed as he wildly and threateningly spoke the last words.

"Come," said Eugene, "lie down again, my good Pere Goriot, and I will write to them. As soon as Bianchon returns I will go for them, if they have not already come."

"If they have not come," repeated the old man, sobbing. "But I shall be dead, dead of anger, before then! I see my whole life clearly now. I have been duped. They do not love me—they have never loved me. I see it plainly now. If they have not come already, they will not come at all. The more they delay, the less likely they are to give me that happiness. I know them. They have never had any sympathy with my griefs or my needs; why should they care if I am dying? Yes, I see it now; I have given them so much, that my gifts have become a matter of course to them. If they had asked me for my eyes, I should have said: 'Take them!' I have been a fool. They think all fathers are like theirs. One should not make himself of too little value. But it is for their own interest to come; and they are parricides if they refuse; they have sinned enough

already, without that. Call them for me: 'Here, Nasie! here, Delphine. Come to your poor sick father who has been so good to you.' Nothing! no one! Must I die like a dog? Is desertion my only reward? They are infamous; they are wretches! I abominate and curse them! I will rise from my grave to curse them anew. And am I not right? have they not done me great wrong? What am I saying? Did you tell me Delphine is here? She is the better of the two. You are my son, Eugene; love her! take my place with her! And the other one is so unhappy! And their fortune! Oh, I am dying, I cannot bear this suffering! Cut off my head, and leave me only my heart!"

"Christopher, go and get Bianchon quickly," cried Eugene, frightened at the manner and the cries of the old man; "and bring me a cabriolet on your way back. Pere Goriot," he continued, "I am going for your daughters, and I will bring them to you."

"Make them come! Use force! Call out the guards and the police: all! all!" said the sick man. "Tell the Government that I must have them, they must come to me!"

"But you have cursed them!" said Eugene.

"Who says so?" replied the old man, in a tone of bewilderment. "You know very well that I love them, I adore them. I shall be cured if I can see them. Go, my good neighbor, my dear child; go quickly. I wish I could thank you, but I have nothing to give you except a dying man's blessing. Oh! if I could only see Delphine! If the other one cannot come, at least bring Delphine to me. Tell her you will no longer love her if she will not come; she loves you too well to refuse you. Something to drink! I feel on fire! Put something on my head; my daughter's hand there would save me. Oh, God! who will look out for their fortunes if I am not here? I must go to Odessa for them; to Odessa, to make starches and pastry."

"Drink this," said Eugene, lifting the dying man and supporting him on his left arm, while with his right hand he held a cup to his lips.

"What a good son you must be to your father and mother," said the old man, pressing Eugene's hand in his own feeble ones. "Do you understand: I am going to die without seeing my daughters? To be always thirsty, and never to have anything to drink—that is how I have lived for the last ten years. My two sons-in-law have destroyed my daughters. Yes, I have had no daughters, ever since they were married. Fathers, make the parliaments pass a law forbidding marriage; never let your daughters get married, if you love them. A son-in-law is a scoundrel who spoils everything. Away with marriage! It is that which takes our daughters from us, and then, when we are dying, we cannot have them. Make a law against the death of a father. It is frightful! Vengeance! My sons-in-law have prevented them from coming. Kill them! Death to Restaud! Death to the Alsatian! they are my assassins. Death or my daughters! Oh, it is over! I am dying without them! Nasie, Delphine, come, come to me! your papa is going—"

"My good Pere Goriot," said Eugene, frightened at the sick man's excitement, "calm yourself; be quiet; don't agitate yourself; try not to think."

"Not to see them, that is the agony!" moaned the old man.

"You are going to see them."

"Truly?" cried the sick man, wildly. "Oh! to see them! I am going to see them, to hear their voices. I shall die happy. Ah, well! I do not ask to live; my troubles would only grow heavier. But to see them before I die, to touch their dresses—ah! only to touch their dresses; it is very little; but I want to feel something belonging to them. Let me touch their hair—"

His head fell upon the pillow as if it had been struck with a club, and his hands moved aimlessly over the covering, as if feeling for his daughters' hair.

"I bless them," he said, with an effort —"bless—"

And he lost consciousness.

XXIV.

JUST then Bianchon entered.

"I met Christopher," he said, "and he has gone to get a carriage for you." Then he looked at the sick man, and raised his eyelids, disclosing dull and lusterless eyes.

"I don't believe," said he, "that he will ever revive." He felt the old man's pulse, and laid his hand upon his heart.

"The machine is still running," he continued; "but in his position it is a misfortune; he had much better die."

"Yes, indeed!" replied Rastignac.

"But what is the matter with you?" asked Bianchon; "you are as pale as death."

"My friend, I have been listening to the most heartrending cries and appeals! If it had not been so tragic, I should have wept; but my heart seemed bound fast."

"See here!" returned the medical student; "we must have ever so many things; where are we going to get the money for them?"

Rastignac drew out his watch.

"You must go and pawn this," he said. "I dare not stop on the road, for I cannot lose a minute, and I expect Christopher now. I have not a sou, and I shall have to pay the driver when I get back."

Rastignac ran down the stairs, and set out for the Rue du Helder. On the way his indignation, aroused by the horrible scene which he had just witnessed, increased with every minute. When he arrived, and inquired for Madame de Restaud, he was told that she was not visible.

"But," he said to the valet, "I come from her father, who is dying."

"We have the strictest orders from Monsieur le Comte—" began the servant.

"If Monsieur de Restaud is there," said Eugene, "tell him the condition his father-in-law is in, and that it is absolutely necessary for me to speak to him at once."

The servant went, and Eugene was left alone for a long time.

"Perhaps he is dying at this very moment," he thought.

At length the valet returned, and ushered him into the first salon, where Monsieur de Restaud received him standing, before a fire-place in which there was no fire.

"Monsieur le Comte," said Rastignac, "your father-in-law is dying in a wretched hole, without a sou to buy wood; he is at the point of death, and wants to see his daughters—"

"Sir," replied the count, coldly, "perhaps you have already perceived that I have very little affection for Monsieur Goriot. He has compromised Madame de Restaud's character, he has been the cause of the unhappiness of my life, and I regard him as the enemy of my repose. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether he lives or dies. Now you know my sentiments regarding him. The world may possibly blame me, but I care nothing for its opinion. I have more important things on my mind than to occupy myself with what a lot of fools may be thinking of me. As for Madame de Restaud, she is not in a condition to go out at present. Besides, I prefer that she should not leave the house. Tell her father that as soon as she shall have fulfilled her duties to me, she will go and see him. If she really loves her father, she can easily be free to go in a few minutes."

"Monsieur le Comte," said Eugene, "it is not for me to judge of your conduct; you are your wife's master; but I count upon your honor to promise me that you will tell her that her father has not a day to live, and that he has already cursed her for being absent from his bedside."

"Tell her yourself," returned the count, moved in spite of himself by Eugene's earnestness and indignation.

Rastignac, ushered by the count, entered the room ordinarily appropriated to the use of the countess, whom he found bathed in tears, and looking the image of despair; he could not help pitying her. Before looking at Rastignac, she glanced at her husband with a frightened and timid air which denoted a complete prostration of

moral and physical strength. The count nodded, and she felt herself at liberty to speak.

"I have heard everything," she said. "Tell my father that, if he could know my situation, he would pardon me. I did not expect this torture, and it is more than I can bear, but I will resist to the end. Tell my father that I am guiltless toward him, in spite of appearances," she cried, with a despairing wail in her voice.

Eugene bowed in silence to the husband and wife, understanding something of the horrible crisis which had come to them, and took his leave. Monsieur de Restaud's tone had warned him that persistence was useless, and he guessed that the lady was no longer free to do as she liked. He hastened to Madame de Nucingen, whom he found lying down.

"I am ill," she said to him. "I took cold coming from the ball, and am afraid of a congestion of the lungs. I am expecting the doctor every minute."

"If you were struck with death," said Eugene, interrupting her, "you ought to go to your father. He is calling for you. If you could hear him, you would no longer think of your own feelings."

"Eugene," she said, "it is very possible that my father is not as ill as you seem to think; but I cannot bear to forfeit your good opinion, and so I will do as you wish. As far as he is concerned, I know he would never forgive himself if I were to be worse on account of exposing myself to go to him. But never mind! I will go as soon as the doctor has been here. But why have you not your watch?" she asked suddenly, missing the chain.

Eugene blushed.

"Eugene! Eugene!" she said; "if you have already lost it or sold it—I don't know how I shall ever forgive you."

The student leaned over her couch and said in a low tone: "Do you want to know? Well, listen! Your father had not a sou with which to buy the shroud in which he will be wrapped this evening. I had to pawn your watch, for I had nothing else."

Delphine sprung up suddenly, and hastening to her desk, took her purse from it and gave it to Eugene. Then she rang the bell, crying:

"I am going! I am going at once, Eugene. I would be a monster to stay away. Go now; I shall be there before you! Therese!" she said to her maid, who entered at the moment, "ask Monsieur de Nucingen to come here. I want to speak to him immediately."

Eugene, happy at being able to announce to the dying man that at least one of his daughters was coming to him, was in a few moments at the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve. He fumbled in the purse for money to pay the driver. It contained just sixty-six francs.

When he reached the door of the sick man's room, he found Pere Goriot supported by Bianchon, and being operated upon by the surgeon of the hospital, under the eyes of the physician. They were burning his back with moxas—the last resort of science, and one which was useless in this case.

"Do you feel it?" asked the physician.

Pere Goriot, catching sight of Eugene, replied:

"They are coming, are they not?"

"He may come out of it yet," said the surgeon; "he is speaking."

"Yes," replied Eugene, to the old man's question. "Delphine will follow me immediately."

"That will do," said the physician to the surgeon; "it is of no use; we cannot save him;" and they laid the dying man down again upon his pallet-bed.

"We must, however, change his linen," continued the physician. "Although we cannot save his life, we can respect his humanity. I shall return, Bianchon," he added. "If he begins to complain again, put the opium on his diaphragm;" and the physician and surgeon went out together.

"Come, Eugene, courage!" said Bianchon to Eugene when they were alone; "we must get a clean shirt on him, and change the bed linen. Go and tell Sylvia to bring us some sheets, and to come and help us."

Eugene went down, and found Madame

Vauquer helping Sylvia to set the table. At Eugene's first words, she came up to him with the sharply sweet air of a merchant who neither wishes to lose his money nor to make his purchaser angry.

"My dear Monsieur Eugene," she said, "you know as well as I do that Pere Goriot has not a sou. To give sheets to a man who is at his last gasp is to lose them, especially as one would have to be sacrificed for the shroud. Now, you already owe me a hundred and forty-four francs; add to that sum forty francs for sheets, and a little more for the few other items you will need, like candles, etc., and it will amount to at least two hundred francs, which a poor widow like me can by no means afford to lose. Be just, Monsieur Eugene; consider how much I have already lost in the last five days. I would have given a good deal if the old man had only gone away when he said he was going to. All this is bad for my business, and if you will put yourself in my place, you will realize that my establishment comes before everything else with me."

Eugene ran rapidly upstairs again to Pere Goriot's room.

"Bianchon, where is the money for the watch?" he said.

"It is on the table; there are three hundred and sixty francs or more. I paid what we owed out of the rest. The pawn ticket is under the money."

"Here, madame," said Rastignac, rushing downstairs again, "settle our account, if you please. Monsieur Goriot has not long to remain with us, and I—"

"Yes, he will soon go out feet first, poor man!" she said, counting out her two hundred francs with an air in which would-be melancholy and secret rejoicing were finely blended.

When she had finished, she said:

"Sylvia, get some sheets, and go up and help the gentlemen;" and she whispered to Eugene: "You will not forget Sylvia, I hope. She has watched for two nights."

As soon as Eugene's back was turned, the widow hastened to her cook. "Sylvia," she said, "take the turned sheets, number seven. Goodness knows, they are nice enough for a dead man."

Eugene was already on his way upstairs, so he did not hear the landlady's words.

"Come," said Bianchon to him, "pass over his shirt. Hold him up, now."

Eugene stationed himself at the head of the bed, and supported the dying man, while Bianchon drew off his shirt. Pere Goriot made a gesture as if to protect something on his chest, and uttered plaintive and inarticulate cries, like an animal which seeks to express some want, but has not the power.

"Oh!" said Bianchon, "he wants a little hair chain and a medallion which we took off him just now, when the doctors were treating him. Poor man! we must put it back again. It is on the chimney-piece."

Eugene went and got the chain of braided blonde hair, doubtless that of Madame Goriot. On one side of the medallion was written: "Anastasie," on the other: "Delphine," and the curls within were of such fine silky hair, that they must have been cut when the old man's daughters were yet in their infancy. When the medallion touched his chest, Pere Goriot uttered a long sigh of satisfaction that was almost frightful in its intensity. It was one of the last glimmerings of consciousness, but it proved that his ruling passion of love for his daughters was strong even after knowledge of all else had fled.

The two students, much affected by the sight, let fall warm tears upon the dying man, who uttered a cry of joy.

"Nasie! Delphine!" he said.

"He is still living," remarked Bianchon.

"What use is it to him?" asked Sylvia.

"To suffer!" replied Rastignac.

After having made a sign to his companion to imitate him, Bianchon knelt down and passed his arms under the loins of the sick man, while Rastignac did the same on the other side of the bed, in order to pass his hands under his back. Sylvia was there, ready to draw out the sheets

and replace them by clean ones, when they should lift the old man up. Deceived no doubt by the tears, Pere Goriot used his last strength to reach out his arms, met a head on each side of the bed, and placing his trembling hands upon them, murmured feebly:

"Ah! my angels!"

He died as he had lived, deceived to the last.

"Poor dear man!" said Sylvia, softened by this exclamation. They laid him tenderly down again, and from that moment all light went out from his face, and nothing was left save the signs of the struggle between life and death, which was taking place within, the termination of which was now merely a question of time.

"He may remain thus for several hours, and die quietly at last," said Bianchon; "but he will not rally again. The brain must be completely suffused."

At this moment a woman was heard ascending the stairs hastily and out of breath.

"She is come too late," said Rastignac. But it was not Delphine, it was Therese, her maid.

"Monsieur Eugene," she said, "there has been a dreadful scene between monsieur and madame about the money that the poor lady wanted for her father. She fainted and the doctor came and had to bleed her. She kept crying: 'My father is dying! I must go to papa!' It was enough to break your heart."

"That will do, Therese," he said. "It would be of no use for her to come now; her father is entirely unconscious, and he would not know her."

"Poor, dear gentleman! Is he as bad as that?" replied the maid.

"You don't need me any more, and I must go to my dinner. It is half past four," said Sylvia, going out and nearly running against Madame de Restaud at the top of the staircase.

The countess walked in, a grave and terrible apparition. She looked at the death-bed, dimly lighted by a single candle, and her tears flowed fast at the sight of her unconscious father, breathing away the last moments of his life. Bianchon delicately left the room.

"I did not escape in time," said the countess to Rastignac.

He shook his head mournfully. She took her father's hand and kissed it.

"Forgive me, my father!" she sobbed. "You have told me that my voice would recall you from the tomb itself. Come back now, if only for one moment, to bless your repentant daughter. Listen to me. Oh! this is frightful! Your benediction is the only one that will ever be given me here below. Everybody hates me, and you alone love me. My very children will hate me. Take me with you. I will love you, and care for you. Oh! he cannot hear me; I am crazy," and falling on her knees, she gazed almost in delirium upon her father's unconscious face.

"Nothing is wanting to complete my grief," she continued, looking at Eugene. "Monsieur de Trailles has gone away, leaving behind him enormous debts, and the certainty to me that I have been deceived by him. My husband will never forgive me, and I have given him unlimited control over my fortune. I have lost all the illusions for which I betrayed the only heart," and she motioned toward her father, "where I was adored. I have scorned him and repulsed him, and done him a thousand unkindnesses, wretch that I am!"

"He knew it," said Eugene.

Madame de Restaud having expressed her desire to watch by her father, Eugene went downstairs to get something to eat. The boarders were all assembled.

"Well!" said the painter to him. "So we are about to have a little death scene up yonder."

"Charles," replied Eugene, "it seems to me that you might find some less solemn subject to joke about."

"Can't we laugh here any more?" demanded the painter. "What difference does it make to him, since Bianchon says that he is senseless?

"Well, then," returned the Musuem clerk, "he will die as he has lived."

"My father is dead!" cried the countess.

At this terrible exclamation Sylvia, Rastignac, and Bianchon hurried up the stairs and found Madame de Restaud lying fainting upon the floor. After having restored her to consciousness, they helped her to enter the hackney-coach which was waiting for her; and Eugene, confiding her to Therese's care, directed her to take her to Madame de Nucingen.

"Yes, he is dead, sure enough!" said Bianchon, coming down again.

"Come, gentlemen, come to dinner," said Madame Vauquer. "The soup is all getting cold."

The two students took seats side by by side.

"What must be done now?" asked Eugene.

"I have closed his eyes and arranged him decently," said Bianchon. "As soon as the certificate of his death has been given in, he will be put into his shroud and buried. What did you suppose was to be done?"

"He won't smell of his bread like this any more," said one of the company, imitating the old man's gesture.

"Oh, for mercy's sake, gentlemen," exclaimed another, "do let us leave Pere Goriot for awhile. We have had nothing else for the past hour! One of the great privileges of this good city of Paris is that one can be born here, live here, and die here, without anybody paying any attention. Do let us profit by the advantages of civilization. There are at least sixty deaths to-day, and we can't mourn for all of them. If Pere Goriot's is one of them, so much the better for him! If you adore him, go and watch over him, and let the rest of us eat our dinners in peace."

"Yes," said the widow, "it is much better for him that he is dead. They say the poor man had a great deal of trouble all his life."

And this was the only funeral eulogy pronounced over a man who, to Eugene, represented the ideal of paternity. The boarders began to talk upon ordinary subjects, and by the time Eugene and Bianchon had finished their meal the noise of knives and forks, the bursts of laughter and of conversation, and the indifferent and careless expression of the faces around them, fairly filled them with horror.

They went out to find a priest who would watch and pray by the dead man that night. They were obliged to make the last rites to the old man correspond to the small amount of money which they had on hand. Toward nine o'clock in the evening the body of Pere Goriot was placed upon a bier in the center of the bare little room, between two candles, and a priest came to sit near it. Before retiring to rest, Rastignac, having inquired of the priest the price of the service to be performed and of the funeral, wrote a note to the Baron de Nucingen and one to the Comte de Restaud, begging them to send some one to provide for the expenses of the burial. He sent Christopher off with the notes and then went to bed and to sleep, overwhelmed with fatigue.

The next day he and Bianchon went themselves to register the death about noon. At two o'clock neither of the two sons-in-law had sent any money, or paid any attention to Rastignac's communication, and he was obliged to pay the priest himself. Sylvia having demanded ten francs for her services in making the old man's shroud, Rastignac and Bianchon entered into a calculation which showed them that, unless the relatives of the dead man did something toward defraying the expenses, there would hardly be enough, and the medical student engaged to procure a pauper's coffin from the hospital, where he could get one for a small sum of money.

"Let us play a trick upon the rascals," he said to Eugene. "Go and procure a grave in Pere la Chaise, and order a service at the church. Then, if the sons-in-law and the daughters refuse to do anything toward paying for it, you can have engraved on the tombstone: 'Here lies Monsieur Goriot, father of the Comtesse de Restaud and of the Baroness de Nucingen, buried at the expense of two students.'"

Finally Eugene himself went to the houses of Monsieur and Madame Nucingen, and of Monsieur and Madame de Restaud. But he got no further than the

door. Each of the *concierges* had received strict orders.

"Monsieur and madame," they said, "receive nobody. Their father is dead, and they are in the depths of grief."

Eugene had enough experience of the Parisian world to know that it was of no use to insist. He took some paper and wrote to Delphine:

"Sell some ornamemt, that your father may be decently borne to his last resting-place."

He sealed it and begged the *concierge* to give it to Therese for her mistress; but the man gave it to the Baron de Nucingen instead, and he threw it into the fire.

After having made every arrangement, Eugene returned to his boarding-house about three o'clock, and could not repress his tears when he saw the coffin, scarcely covered with a scanty black cloth, placed upon two chairs in the deserted street. There was not even a piece of crape upon the door. It was a poor man's burial, without either followers, friends or relatives. Bianchon, who was obliged to go to his hospital, had left a note for Rastignac, giving an account of what he had done. He had found that a mass would be too expensive and therefore out of the question, and that they must be content with the more modest service of vespers. When Eugene had finished reading this scrawl, he caught sight of the old man's cherished medallion in Madame Vauquer's hands.

"How did you dare to take that?" he said.

"Upon my word!" said Sylvia, "is that to be buried with him? It is gold."

"Certainly," answered Eugene, indignantly. "Let him at least have the only thing which can represent his two daughters."

When the undertaker came, Eugene had the coffin opened, and he placed tenderly upon the chest of the dead man that which had recalled to him the time when Delphine and Anastasie were young and pure, his own loving children.

Rastignac and Christopher were the only ones who followed the hearse which bore the poor old man to Saint Etienne du Mont, a church not far distant from the Rue Neuve Sainte Genevieve. When they arrived the body was placed in a little dark, low chapel, where the student searched in vain for the two daughters of Pere Goriot or for their husbands. But he was alone there with Christopher, who had deemed it his duty to follow to the grave the man who had been the means of procuring him so many fine *pourboires*. While waiting for the two priests, the choir-boy and the beadle, Rastignac pressed Christopher's hand, without being able to utter a word.

"Yes, Monsieur Eugene," said Christopher, "he was an honest and worthy gentleman, who never spoke sharply and never did any harm."

The two priests, the choir-boy and the beadle finally arrived and gave all that could be expected for seventy francs from a religion which is not rich enough to be able to say its prayers gratis. They chanted a psalm, the "Libera," and "De profundis," and the service lasted just twenty minutes. There was one carriage in waiting for a priest and a choir-boy, and they agreed to take Eugene and Christopher in with them.

"There is nobody to follow," said the priest, "so we can go quickly. It is almost half past five."

However, just as the body was placed in the hearse, two carriages, with armorial bearings, but empty, drove up and followed the funeral *cortége* to Pere la Chaise. They were those of the Baron de Nucingen and Comte de Restaud. At six o'clock Pere Goriot's body was lowered into the grave, around which were gathered his daughters' servants, who disappeared with the clergy as soon as the latter had repeated the short prayer due to the old man from the student's money.

When the two grave-diggers had thrown a few spadefuls of earth upon the coffin, they came to Eugene for their *pourboire*. He fumbled in his pockets, but found nothing there and was obliged to borrow twenty sous from Christopher. This fact, insignificant in itself, put the climax to the horrible sadness and gloom of his

mind. Night was falling, and a foggy twilight threw its melancholy shadow over the place, as he folded his arms and stood looking at the grave, while bitter tears fell slowly from his eyes.

Seeing him thus, Christopher silently went away and left him.

When he was left alone he walked to the higher ground of the cemetery, where he could see Paris lying along the two banks of the Seine. The lights were already beginning to gleam. His eyes were fastened upon the spot between the dome of the Invalides and the column of the Place Vendome, where lived that fashionable world into which he had been so eager to penetrate. And as he gazed he said significantly:

"It lies between us two now!"

And as the first act of the defiance which he thus hurled at Society, he went to dine with Madame de Nucingen.

III.

CESAR BIROTTEAU.

I.

On winter nights the noise in the Rue Saint Honoré is almost ceaseless, for the kitchen-gardeners, on their way to market, follow immediately upon the rolling of the carriages returning from ball or theater.

It was just at this organ-point in the great symphony of Parisian uproar that the wife of Monsieur César Birotteau, merchant-perfumer near the Place Vendôme, suddenly awoke from a frightful dream, in which she had seemed to see herself as two people at once; as a beggar in rags on the threshold of her shop, and as her rightful self, seated in her own armchair behind the counter. In it, too, she had seemed to hear one image of herself asking alms of the other, and to listen to her own voice both at the door and at the counter.

Terrified, she put out her hand to waken her husband, but grasped only empty air; his place beside her was cold and vacant.

Her agony of fear became so intense that she was unable to turn her head; her throat contracted, her voice died away, and she sat motionless, her eyes wide open, her hair in wild disorder, her ears full of strange sounds, and her heart throbbing violently in a sort of waking nightmare, a frenzy of groundless fear.

Her thoughts traveled with the rapidity of lightning, and in a space of time in reality very short, but seemingly interminable, her mind had advanced more ideas and recalled more memories than in the ordinary state of her faculties it could have touched upon in a whole day.

Her bewildered meditations ran somewhat as follows:

"There is no possible reason why Birotteau should have left his bed! I wonder if the veal that he ate at supper has disagreed with him? But if he had been sick, he would have wakened me. During the nineteen years that we have slept together, in this bed, and in this same house, this is the very first time that he has ever left my side without letting me know. Did he really go to bed with me last night? Why, certainly! How stupid I am!"

She glanced at the bed, and saw lying upon it her husband's night-cap, still preserving the almost conical shape of his head.

"He must be dead!" she thought. "Has he killed himself, I wonder? But why should he? Since he was elected deputy to the mayor, two years ago, he has certainly been odd. It was rather a pity to put him into public office. But his business is doing well, for he has just given me a new shawl. Perhaps, though, his affairs are in a bad state, after all! Pshaw! I should know it, if that were

the case. Didn't we sell five thousand francs' worth, yesterday? Besides, a deputy-mayor cannot commit suicide, for he is too well acquainted with the laws. Where in the world is he, then?"

She was powerless either to turn her head or to reach out her hand to pull the bell-rope which would have aroused the cook, three clerks and a shop-boy. Still under the dominion of the nightmare which seemed to have possession of her, even though awake, she forgot all about her daughter, who was peacefully sleeping in the next room, the door of which was near the foot of her bed. At last she cried: "Birotteau!"

But she received no reply: for although she thought she had spoken the name, she had in reality made no sound.

"Can he have left me?" she thought. "But no! he loves me too well. Did he not tell Madame Roguin once that he had never been unfaithful to me, even in thought? The man is the personification of integrity. If any one deserves to go to heaven, it is he. I don't know what he ever finds to accuse himself of, to his confessor. For a Royalist, which he is without really knowing why, poor man, he does not make much parade of his religion. He sneaks away to go to mass, as if he were almost ashamed of it. He fears God, but does not trouble himself much about hell. Oh, no! He cannot have left me: he loves me better than anything in the world; even his daughter comes second to me. By the way, Césarine is there!—Césarine! Césarine!—Birotteau has never had a thought which he has not told me. This is very extraordinary!"

She turned her head with difficulty, and looked furtively about the room, which was full of those night effects that are so picturesque and so indescribable. How is language to paint the terrible aspects of shadows, the fantastic movements of curtains just stirred by the wind; the flickerings of the dim light, which give mystery to the folds of red calico; the flames which cast a momentary sparkle upon some shining object, and make it resemble the eye of a thief; the effect of a dress, which appears to be a kneeling figure; in short, all those realities which appear to be so unreal, and which are so startling to an imagination already terrified and on the alert for horrors?

Madame Birotteau thought she saw a strong light in the room beyond, and immediately decided that the place was on fire; but catching sight of a red silk handkerchief, which to her disordered fancy seemed like a veritable sea of blood, her mind settled conclusively upon the idea of robbers, especially when she thought she discerned traces of a severe struggle in the way the furniture was arranged. At the remembrance of the sum of money which the strong-box contained, a real fear dissipated the chill torpor in which the nightmare had held her, and she leaped to the floor with the idea of succoring her husband, whom she supposed to be at the mercy of assassins.

"Birotteau! Birotteau!" she ejaculated, at last, in a voice of anguish.

She found the perfumer standing in the middle of the next room, shivering with cold, for his green and brown dressing-gown hung so loosely on his figure that it afforded no warmth to his shaking limbs. He held a yard-stick in his hand, with which he was apparently measuring the air; and he was so preoccupied with his calculations that he was unmindful of the cold, and only answered vacantly: "Well, what do you want, Constance?" when his wife called him.

"Upon my word, César," she exclaimed, "you grow queerer every day! Why did you leave me without letting me know? I was nearly frightened to death, and didn't know what in the world had become of you. What are you doing there? You will have a fine cold by morning. Do you hear me, Birotteau?"

"Yes, my dear, here I am," replied the perfumer, coming into the bedroom.

"Come and warm yourself, and tell me what new freak this is," resumed the lady, raking the cinders apart, and hastening to re-light the fire. "I am frozen. I was a fool to get out of bed without wrapping myself up, but I really thought you were being murdered."

The merchant put his candlestick carefully on the mantel-piece, wrapped his dressing-gown more closely about him, and mechanically wandered about the room until he found a flannel skirt, which he brought to his wife.

"Here," he said, "put this on;" and then, continuing his previous train of thought, he added:

"Twenty-two and eighteen. We can have a superb salon."

"Birotteau," said his wife, sharply, "have you gone crazy? Or are you dreaming?"

"No, my dear," he replied; "I am calculating."

"You might at least save your nonsense until daylight," she returned, fastening the skirt, and cautiously opening the door of her daughter's room.

"Césarine is asleep," she added, "so she will not hear what we say. Now speak out! What is the matter with you?"

"We can give a ball," he said.

"Give a ball! we?" she returned. "Upon my word, my dear, you really are dreaming!"

"No, I am not dreaming," he replied. "Listen! A man must keep up appearances in accordance with his position. I belong now to the Government and ought to do everything I can to support it. The Duc de Richelieu has just freed France, and according to Monsieur de la Billardiere, those officers who represent the city of Paris ought to consider it their individual duty, each in his own sphere, to celebrate the liberation of the country. Now I should like to show a true patriotism which will make all these so-called Liberals blush. Do you think that I do not love my country? I want to show these same Liberals, my enemies, that to love the king is to love France."

"And do you really think that you have any enemies, my poor Birotteau?" asked his wife, anxiously.

"Yes, indeed, my dear, we have enemies," he replied. "Half of our friends in this neighborhood are our enemies. They are all saying: 'Birotteau is in luck; he had nothing to start with, and yet here he is, a deputy; everything succeeds with him.' Well, they are going to have a nice little surprise. In the first place, you must know that I am now a chevalier of the Legion of Honor; the king signed the order yesterday."

"Oh! in that case," said Madame Birotteau, very much impressed, "of course we must give the ball, my dear. But what have you done to deserve the Cross?"

"When Monsieur de la Billardiere told me about it yesterday," replied Birotteau, a little embarrassed, "I asked myself that very question; but in reviewing any claims to the honor, I came to the conclusion that they were sufficient, and that the Government had done wisely. In the first place, I am a Royalist, and was wounded at Saint-Roch in the Vendemiaire; and it is something merely to have borne arms in the good cause at that time. Then, I am said to have conducted my consular affairs to the general satisfaction. And, to crown all, I am deputy-mayor, and the king is in the habit of granting four crosses to the municipal body of officials of the city of Paris; and when they came to examine into the merits of the deputies, the prefect placed me first on the list.

"Besides, the king of course knows me; thanks to old Ragon, I have been able to furnish him with the only powder he will deign to use; for we alone possess the *recipe* of the powder of the late queen, poor, dear, unhappy victim! The mayor has vigorously supported me; and what can I do? If the king chooses to give me the cross, without my asking for it, surely I should be very much wanting in respect for him if I were to refuse it. Did I ask to be deputy?

"And so, my dear, since we have the wind in our sails, as your uncle Pillerault would say, I have decided to remodel our home in accordance with our higher station. Since I seem destined to be somebody, I will risk becoming whatever the Lord wishes—even sub-prefect, if such is my destiny. My dear, you are very much mistaken, if you think that a citizen has fulfilled his obligations to his country when he has, for twenty years, merely

sold perfumes to those who choose to come and buy. Do you always want to stay behind your counter? You have stayed there quite long enough, thank the Lord! The ball will be our fête. I am going to burn our sign of 'La Reine des Roses,' and shall paint out the words: 'César Birotteau, Merchant Perfumer, Successor to Ragon,' and simply put in their place, in great gold letters, 'Perfumeries.' I shall put on the ground-floor the desk, the safe, and a pretty little room for you; I shall take the back shop, the dining-room and the kitchen for our new shop. I shall rent the first floor of the next house, and cut a door in the wall. I shall turn the staircase around, so that we can go from one house to the other. Then we shall have plenty of room. I shall refurnish your chamber, fit up a boudoir for you, and give a pretty room to Césarine. The young woman whom we shall hire to wait upon the shop, our head clerk, and your maid (yes, madame, you shall have one!) will have rooms on the second floor. On the third, we will put the kitchen, the cook, and the errand-boy. The fourth will be our general storehouse for bottles, glass and china. The workroom we will put in the garret, so that passers-by will no longer see how things are made. That did very well for the Rue Saint Denis, but it is out of the question for the Rue Saint Honore. Our shop must be fitted up like a parlor. We are not the only perfumers who have arrived at distinction. And are there not vinegar and mustard merchants who command the National Guard, and are held in high honor at court? Let us imitate them; let us extend our business, and at the same time push ourselves into good society."

"Now, Birotteau," returned his wife, "do you know what you remind me of when you talk like that? You make me think of a man who expects to find noon at two o'clock. Do you remember the advice I gave you when they were talking of making you mayor? 'Peace before everything,' I said. 'You are no more made for that position than my arm is made to be the sail of a windmill. Grandeur will be the ruin of you.' You did not listen to me, however. And now, to dabble in politics, you must have money; have you got it? And is it possible that you want to burn your sign, which cost six hundred francs, and give up the 'Reine des Roses,' your chief glory? Leave ambition for others, and do not burn your fingers with politics. We have a good hundred thousand francs, besides our business, our shop and our stock. If you want to increase your fortune, do as you did in 1793. You can invest your money, and get an income of ten thousand pounds, without any injury to the business. We can take advantage of this to get our daughter married, to sell our property here, and go into the country. Haven't you been longing, for the last fifteen years, to buy les Trésorières, that pretty little estate near Chinon, with water-meadows, woods and vineyards, and with two farms which bring a thousand francs? That is a place where we should both like to live, and which we can have for sixty thousand francs. And here you are, wanting a place in the Government, instead! Remember that we are only perfumers. Sixteen years ago, before you had invented the Double Pâte des Sultanes and the Eau Carminative, if any one had told you that some day you would have money enough to buy les Trésorières, you would have been wild with joy. Well! now that you can buy this property, of which you used to be forever talking, you speak of spending foolishly the money which we have earned by the sweat of our brows. I have a right to say *our* brows, for I have always been in my place behind the counter. Now, wouldn't it be much better to marry your daughter to some Paris notary, and have a lodging with her when you wanted it, and to live eight months in the year at Chinon, than to use up all your money here? We can give eight thousand pounds of income to our daughter, and keep two thousand for ourselves; the sale of our property here will give us enough to buy les Trésorières; and there, my dear, we can live like princes, while here it takes at least a million

to make a person of any consequence whatever."

"That is just what I expected you to say," remarked César. "I am not so stupid (although you may think so) as not to have thought of all that. Now listen: Alexander Crottat would exactly suit us for a son-in-law, and he will have a place in Roguin's office; but do you think he would be satisfied with a hundred thousand francs of dowry, even supposing we gave all our ready money to our daughter? (Which in my opinion we had better do; for I would live on a crust all my life to see her as happy as a queen, the wife of a Parisian notary.) Well! a hundred thousand francs, or even eight thousand pounds, are not enough to buy the privilege of studying with Roguin. This little Xandrot, as we call him, thinks us, as everybody else does, much richer than we are. If his father, who is a miserly old farmer, does not sell a hundred thousand francs' worth of land, Xandrot will not be a notary, for he must have four or five hundred thousand francs in order to get into Roguin's office. If Crottat is not able to give half of it down, what is he going to do? Césarine must have two hundred thousand francs for her dowry, and when we retire from Paris I want to have an income of fifteen thousand pounds. What do you say to that, eh? If I can make it clear as day to you, will you cease to object?"

"Oh!" she returned. "If you have the have the wealth of Peru at your command—"

"Yes, I have," he said, taking his wife by the waist, and patting her lovingly, in a transport of joy which animated his whole face. "I didn't like to speak of it to you until the whole thing was settled, but I expect to finish it up to-morrow. It is this: Roguin has proposed a speculation to me which is so obviously sure and safe that he has himself gone into it, together with Ragon, your uncle Pillerault, and two others of his clients. We are going to buy land in the neighborhood of the Madeleine, which, according to Roguin's calculations, will in three years be worth four times as much as it is at present. Each one of us is to have a certain proportion; I furnish three hundred thousand francs, and own three-eighths of the property. If any one of us wants money, Roguin will let him have it on a mortgage. To keep a sort of control over things, I have preferred to be nominal proprietor of one-half, which will belong to Pillerault, Ragon and myself. Roguin will, under the name of Charles Claparon, be proprietor of the other half, and will, like me, give a counter-deed to his associates. There are some other details, but it would take too long to explain them all to you. The land once paid for, all we will have to do will be to fold our arms and wait for the three years to go by, after which we shall be worth a million. Césarine will be only twenty years old then, and we shall be rich enough to be of some consequence."

"That is all very fine," returned Madame Birotteau, "but where are you going to get your three hundred thousand francs?"

"You don't understand anything about business, my dear," replied her husband. "I shall give the hundred thousand francs of which Roguin already has charge; I can borrow forty thousand francs on the buildings and the gardens where our manufactories are, in the faubourg of the Temple; we have twenty thousand francs saved up, and so in all we can raise a hundred and sixty thousand francs. That leaves a hundred and forty thousand, for which I will sign bills payable to the order of Monsieur Charles Claparon, banker; he will give me the money, minus the commission; and there we are! When the bills become due, we will pay for them out of our profits. If we are not able to, Roguin will take a mortgage at five per cent on my part of the land. But there is no need of borrowing trouble about that: I have discovered an extract for making the hair grow, called Huile Comagène. By means of hydraulic pressure I can get the oil from nuts without any difficulty. In one year, according to my reckoning, I shall have made at least a hundred thousand francs. I am planning a circular which shall be

headed: 'Down with the wigs!' and which will produce an immense effect. You have not noticed that I could not sleep, but for the last three months the successor of the 'Huile de Macassar' has kept me awake at night. I am going to run Macassar off the track!"

"These plans that you have had in your head all this time, without telling me of them, are very fine," remarked his wife, sarcastically. "My dream just now, of seeing myself a beggar at my own door, must have been a warning sent from Heaven. Before long, we shall be utterly ruined. César, you shall never do this thing, as long as I am living! There is some trickery underneath it all, which you do not see, because you are too honest and loyal to suspect roguery in others. Why have they come to you and offered you millions? You strip yourself of everything that you are worth, and even go beyond your means; and if your *huile* is not a success, if you do not succeed in borrowing money, or if the land does not prove to be as valuable as you think, how are you going to meet your notes? With your nutshells and your nuts? In order to push yourself into better society, you do not want your name to be on the shop, and even propose to take down your sign of the 'Reine des Roses,' and yet you propose to get out circulars and bills which will advertise César Birotteau at the corner of every street, and upon every vacant board where one can be pasted."

"Oh, you don't understand," he said. "I shall have a branch shop under the name of Popinot in some house near the Rue des Lombards, and I will put little Anselme in charge of it. In that way I can pay the debt of gratitude which I owe to Monsieur and Madame Ragon, by giving their nephew a good position, where he will have a chance to make his fortune, perhaps. Those poor Ragons have not seemed to be in very good circumstances lately."

"I don't care," persisted his wife, doggedly, "these people are after your money."

"What people, my dear?" he asked. "Do you mean your uncle Pillerault, who loves us as if we were his own children, and who dines with us every Sunday? Or old Ragon, our predecessor, who is the very soul of honesty? Or even Roguin, a Parisian notary, a man fifty-seven years old, who has held his present profession for twenty-five years? Why, if it were necessary, any one of these people would be glad to aid me. What do you suspect, my dear? I must say it has always seemed to me that your great fault lies in being too suspicious. As soon as we had two sous' worth of goods in the shop, you took it into your head that every customer was a thief. And now I must go on my knees to you, and beg you to let me make you rich. For a Parisian woman, you have not much ambition! If it were not for these perpetual fears of yours, I should be the happiest man alive. If I had listened to you, I should never have made either the Pâte des Sultanes or the Eau Carminative. To be sure, we have made a living out of the shop, but these two discoveries and our soaps have yielded us a hundred and sixty thousand francs clear gain. Without my genius (for I really have talent as a perfumer), we should now be only insignificant retail dealers, hardly able to make both ends meet, and I should not be one of the merchants who assemble for the election of judges at the Tribunal of Commerce; I should have been neither judge nor deputy. Do you know what I should have been? Nothing but a shop-keeper, like old Ragon—no offense to him, for I respect shops, as I ought, considering what we owe to ours. After having sold perfumery for forty years, we should possess, like him, three thousand pounds of income; and as prices go now, we should have, like him, barely enough to live on. If I had followed your advice—you who are always afraid that you will not have to-morrow what you have to-day—I should have no credit, no cross of the Legion of Honor, and no foothold in politics. Oh, yes! you may shake your head, but if this affair is successful, I may even become a member of the Chamber of Deputies of Paris. I am not named César for nothing; everything succeeds with me. It is very strange,

that while everybody else acknowledges my good judgment, the only person whom I care to please is precisely the one who thinks me stupid and incapable!"

These remarks, although interspersed with eloquent pauses, and flung out like bullets, expressed so much lasting and deep affection that Madame Birotteau was quite softened; but, like a true woman, she took advantage of the love which she inspired, and used it as a weapon to win her cause.

"Well, Birotteau," she said, "if you love me, let me be happy in my own way. We have neither of us had much education; we don't know how to converse, or how to behave like society people; what sort of an appearance do you suppose we should make, if you got a Government place? Now I should be happy at les Trésorières. I was always fond of animals and birds, and I could pass my life so pleasantly, taking care of the chickens and looking after the farm. Let us sell out, get Césarine married, and think no more about your other plans. We will spend every winter in Paris, with our daughter and son-in-law, and politics and business will have no power to disturb us then. Why do you want to get above other people? Is not our present fortune enough for our wants? If you were a millionaire, could you be any happier than you are now? Look at Uncle Pillerault; he is sensible enough to be contented with what he has, and spends his life in doing good to others. He does not care for fine furniture. Now, I will wager that you have already given an order to the upholsterer; I saw Braschon here, and I am very sure that he did not come to buy perfumery, either."

"Well, yes, my love," acknowledged her husband, "the furniture is ordered, and the workmen will begin on the place to-morrow, directed by an architect whom Monsieur de la Billardière recommended to me."

"Lord have mercy upon us!" cried the lady.

"Now do be reasonable, my dear," remonstrated César. "Do you think that a fresh and pretty woman like you, only thirty-seven years old, can be allowed to go and bury herself at Chinon? I myself am only thirty-nine years old, and I propose to take advantage of the fine career which chance has opened to me. Come now! If the thing were not as sure as gold—"

"Sure!" she ejaculated.

"Yes, sure," he repeated. "I have been figuring at it for the last two months. Without seeming to do so, I have in reality been getting information about building, from architects and business men. Monsieur Grindot, who is going to remodel our house, would be only too thankful to join in the speculation if he had the money."

"There will be buildings to put up," returned his wife, dryly; "and he wants the job, so that he can make something out of you."

"Do you think that any one could overreach people like Pillerault and Roguin?" demanded the perfumer. "The profits are as sure as those of the Pâte des Sultanes."

"But, my dear," asked his wife, "why does Roguin need to speculate, if he has already made his fortune? He passes the shop, looking more careworn than any Minister of State, with a downward look which I do not like; he has some secret care. How do you know that he will not hold up his head again when he has got hold of your money? He has grown a good deal older in the last five years, and he looks to me like a dissipated man. Sometimes when I am dressing in the morning, I see him just getting back to his house, from nobody knows where. Is that a fit kind of a life for a notary to lead? Then he is intimate with that little beggar of a Du Tillet, our former clerk; and I don't approve of the friendship. Besides all that, what are the present owners of this land thinking of, to sell for a hundred sous something which is worth a hundred francs? If you were to meet a child who did not know the value of a louis, wouldn't you tell him? This business of yours looks to me like nothing more nor less than a theft—no offense to you!"

"Women are sometimes very odd," observed the perfumer, "and they get their ideas very much mixed up. If Roguin had had nothing to do with this affair, you would have said, 'This is a business in which Roguin is not concerned, and therefore it is worth nothing.' As it is, his very connection with it is in its favor, and yet you say—"

"No," she interrupted, "it is a Monsieur Claparon who is connected with this."

"Well," he returned, "a notary cannot let his name appear in a speculation."

Madame Birotteau smiled triumphantly. "And why then," she asked, "does he do something which is forbidden him by law? Tell me that, you who are so well acquainted with the law!"

"Let me continue," he replied, loftily. "Roguin is concerned in it, and yet you say that the business is worth nothing. Is that reasonable? And you say that he is already rich. But could not the same be said of me? Would Ragon and Pillerault have any business to come to me and say: 'Why do you have anything to do with this? You are rich enough already?'"

"Merchants are not in the position of notaries," said Madame Birotteau.

"At all events," continued César, "my conscience is clear. The people who are selling, sell because they are obliged to, and we are no more robbing them than any one robs who buys a thing at a bargain. We are buying the land at the price it brings to-day. In two years' time it will be a very different matter. Constance-Barbe-Joséphine Pillerault, you will never catch César Birotteau doing anything which is contrary to the most rigid honesty, or against the law, or conscience, or delicacy. A man who has been established for eighteen years, to be accused of dishonesty by his own wife!"

"Come, don't excite yourself, César," replied Constance. "The wife who has lived with you all that time knows that you are the soul of honesty. You are master, after all. You have made your fortune yourself, it is yours, and you have a right to spend it. We may be reduced to the depths of misery, but you will never hear a single reproach from either me or my daughter. But listen: when you invented your Pâte des Sultanes and your Eau Carminative, what did you risk? from five to six thousand francs. But now, you are putting your whole fortune upon one throw of the cards, and you are not the only player: you have companions who may prove themselves more cunning than you. Give your ball, if you want to; make over your house; spend ten thousand francs; it is useless, but it is not ruinous. But as for your affair of the Madeleine, I disapprove of it entirely. You are a perfumer, and you had better remain one, and not try to be a land speculator. We women have an instinct which rarely deceives us. I have warned you, and now you may act as you think best; you have steered your ship very well so far, and I will follow you, César. But I shall tremble until I see our fortune safely invested, and Césarine well married. God grant that my dream be not a prophecy!"

This submission irritated Birotteau, who had recourse to an innocent *ruse* which he had often employed on similar occasions.

"Listen, Constance," he said. "I have not yet given my word, but it is all understood."

"Don't let us say any more about it, then," she replied. "Honor before fortune, always. Come, go to bed, my dear; the wood has given out. Besides, we can talk just as well in bed, if you want to. Oh! what a dreadful dream I did have! Fancy seeing one's own self! It was frightful. Césarine and I will pray with all our might for the success of your scheme."

"Doubtless the help of God will not be amiss," said Birotteau, gravely. "But the extract of nuts is also a powerful aid! I made this discovery, as I did that of the Double Pâte des Sultanes, by chance: that time by opening a book, this time by looking at the picture of Hero and Leander. You remember, don't you? a woman who is pouring oil on her lover's head. The

surest speculations are those which are founded upon vanity, self-love, and the desire of looking well. Those are sentiments which never die."

"Alas! I know it," sighed his wife.

"When people get to a certain age," continued the perfumer, "they will do anything in the world to preserve their hair. Hair-dressers have been telling me for some time, that they sell not only the Macassar, but everything else which is good for dyeing the hair or making it grow. Since the peace, men and women see more of each other, and women don't fancy bald heads; eh? So you see the demand for this article is explained by the political situation. An article which would succeed in keeping the hair in good condition would sell like bread, particularly as this one will certainly be approved by the Academy of Sciences. Perhaps Monsieur Vauquelin will help me again. I shall go to him to-morrow and submit my idea to him, offering him that engraving which I have just succeeded in finding, after two years of research in Germany. My new idea has to do with the analysis of the hair. Chiffreville, Monsieur Vauquelin's partner in the manufacture of chemical products, told me about it. If my discovery agrees with his, my extract will be bought by both sexes. My idea is a fortune, I tell you. I can't sleep for thinking of it. It is a most fortunate thing that little Popinot has the finest hair in the world. Now if we could only get a young lady clerk behind the counter who would have hair long enough to touch the ground, and would say (if she could conscientiously) that the Huile Comagène had something to do with it, gray-headed people would throw themselves upon us, like poverty upon the world. And now won't you agree to the ball, my dear? I am not wicked, but I should really like to meet that little rogue of a Du Tillet, who is so stuck-up with his fortune, and who always avoids me at the Bourse. He is very well aware that I know something about him which is not much to his credit. Perhaps I have been too good to him. Isn't it odd, my dear, that one may sometimes be punished for his good deeds—of course I mean here below! I behaved like a father to him; you don't know all that I have done for him."

"It makes my flesh creep just to hear his name," replied his wife. "If you had known what he wanted to do to you, you would not have kept the secret of that theft of three thousand francs; for I guessed the way in which the matter was arranged. If you had sent him to jail, perhaps you would have done a good service to several people."

"Why, what did he think of doing to me?" asked her husband.

"Oh, nothing!" replied the lady. "Only, if you were disposed to listen to me to-night, Birotteau, I would give you a piece of good advice, namely, to let Du Tillet alone."

"It would look very extraordinary," said César, "to have me forbid the house to a clerk for whom I went surety for the first twenty thousand francs with which he began business. No, I can't do that. Besides, Du Tillet may have reformed."

"Everything will be topsy-turvy here," observed Madame Birotteau.

"What do you mean by that?" inquired her husband. "Everything will be beautifully in order when it is finished. Have you forgotten already what I have just told you about the staircase, and about that part of the next house which I am going to rent, and for which I have already made arrangements with the umbrella merchant, Cayron? We must go together to-morrow to Monsieur Molineux, his landlord. I have as much business on hand for to-morrow as any Minister of State."

"You have turned my brain with your projects," said Constance. "I am all confused over them. Besides, Birotteau, I am sleepy."

"Good-morning, then," replied her husband. "You see I say good-morning because it is really daylight. Ah! she is already off, the dear woman! She shall be the richest of the rich, or my name is not César."

And in a few moments more, Constance and César were both snoring peacefully.

II.

A RAPID glance over the previous history of this household, whose principal members had been engaged in the amicable altercation related above, will serve to explain by what a singular combination of circumstances César Birotteau was at the same time deputy and perfumer, retired officer of the National Guard, and chevalier of the Legion of Honor. In sounding the depths of his character, and the causes of his rise in life, we will perhaps be better able to comprehend how those accidents of commerce which a strong mind will easily surmount may become irreparable catastrophes for weaker spirits. Events in themselves are never absolute; their results depend entirely upon individuals. Misfortune is a steppingstone for genius, but an abyss for feebleness.

A gardener of the neighborhood of Chinon, named Jacques Birotteau, married the maid of a lady for whom he was at work; they had three boys, his wife dying in giving birth to the third, and the poor man surviving her only a short time. The mistress had been much attached to her maid, and she caused the eldest of the three boys to be brought up with her own children, and then sent to college.

Ordained a priest, François Birotteau was in hiding during the Revolution, leading the wandering life of the nonjuring clergy of that time, who were tracked from place to place like wild beasts, and guillotined upon the slightest pretense. At the moment when this history begins, he was vicar of the cathedral of Tours, and had only left that city once for the purpose of visiting his brother César. The continual motion and uproar of Paris had so stunned and bewildered the good priest that he had scarcely dared to stir from his room. After a week's visit he had gone back to Tours, vowing never again to return to Paris.

The second son of the gardener, Jean Birotteau, was drafted into the army, and rapidly mounted to the rank of captain during the first days of the Revolution. At the battle of la Trébia, Macdonald called for willing volunteers to carry a battery; and Captain Jean Birotteau, advancing with his company, was killed. The destiny of the Birotteaus seemed to have decreed that wherever they went they should be down-trodden and oppressed by men or events.

The third child was the hero of this story. When, at the age of fourteen, César knew enough to read, write and cipher, he left the country and came on foot to Paris, with a single louis in his pocket. Owing to a recommendation from an apothecary of Tours, he was received as shop-boy by Monsieur and Madame Ragon, merchant perfumers. At this point in his career César was the possessor of a pair of wooden shoes, some small-clothes and blue stockings, a flowered waistcoat, a peasant vest, three coarse shirts of good linen, and his stout traveling-stick. But if his hair was cut like a choir boy's, he had the solid, healthy physique of his native place; if he sometimes felt like giving way to laziness, the desire was counteracted by his longing to make his fortune; if he lacked both mind and instruction, he had an instinctive uprightness and delicate sentiments which he inherited from his mother.

He earned his board and six francs a month, and was lodged in the garret. The clerks, who taught him to make up packages, to do errands and to sweep out the shop and the street, made fun of him pitilessly, after their fashion; and Monsieur and Madame Ragon spoke to him as they would have done to a dog. No one cared whether the apprentice were tired or not, although in the evening his feet, wounded by the pavement, ached painfully, and his shoulders felt lame and bruised. This exemplification of the gospel of all great cities, "each one for himself," made César feel that life in Paris was very hard and cruel. He wept, as he thought at evening of Touraine, where the peasant worked at his ease, where the mason leisurely placed his stones, and idleness was wisely mingled with labor;

but he slept soundly all night, and went about his duties in the morning with the faithfulness of a watch-dog. If he ever complained, the head clerk would smile at him with a knowing air, and say:

"Ah! my boy; all is not rose-color at the 'Reine des Roses,' and larks do not fall into our mouths ready roasted. We must run after them before we catch them."

The cook, a fat woman of Picardy, took all the best morsels for herself, and never spoke to César except to complain bitterly of Monsieur and Madame Ragon, who left her nothing to steal. Toward the end of the first month, this woman, left in charge of the house one Sunday, began talking with César, who found her very charming, now that she was cleaned up; and the two entered upon an enduring friendship, without which the poor, forlorn boy might have stranded upon the first concealed rocks in his career, but which was commented upon with unmerciful raillery by the clerks. However, at the end of two years the cook left, to go to a young man from her native place, a youth twenty years of age, and possessed of several acres of land, who had consented to allow himself to be married to her.

During these two years César had advanced much in worldly wisdom; his feet had grown accustomed to the pavements and his shoulders to the heavy boxes. He was now, in 1792, sixteen years old, and studying commerce with a countenance whose intelligence was concealed beneath its simplicity. He observed the customers attentively, asked questions at odd moments about the different articles of merchandise, and remembered everything that was told him; and at last was better acquainted with the stock in trade, its prices, and amounts, than any one else; and Monsieur and Madame Ragon fell into the habit henceforth of depending upon his knowledge.

On the day when the terrible levy of soldiers, in the year II., swept away most of the dependents from the house of the citizen Ragon, César Birotteau, now junior clerk, profited by the event to obtain fifty pounds salary a month, and seated himself at his employer's table with inexpressible joy. The junior clerk of the "Reine des Roses," now worth six hundred francs, had at last a room where he could conveniently put away, in long-coveted articles of furniture, the clothing which he had gradually gathered together; and his gentleness and modesty overleaped the barrier which, in other times, would have been raised between himself and his employers; so that, toward the end of this year, his recognized honesty caused him to be placed in charge of the safe, while Madame Ragon watched over his clothing with the care of a mother, and he was admitted to the intimate companionship of the two old people.

In the Vendémiaire of 1794, César, who possessed a hundred louis d'or, entered upon a fortunate speculation at the Bourse, the result of which was to make him watch the movements of money and of public affairs with an anxiety which caused him to throb at each reverse or success which marked this period in the history of France.

During this time, Monsieur Ragon, former perfumer to her majesty Queen Marie Antoinette, confided to César his attachment for the fallen tyrants, and his words had a lasting effect upon the youth. These conversations, held in the evening, after the shop was closed, the street deserted, and the accounts made up, converted him into a stanch loyalist; and the anecdotes which the two old people related concerning the virtuous actions of Louis XVI., and the merits of his beautiful and unfortunate queen, fired César's imagination; while the horrible destiny of these two crowned heads, cut off within a stone's throw of the very place where he was sitting, caused his heart to revolt against a government which did not hesitate to shed innocent blood. Besides all this, commercial interest caused him to realize that political storms were fatal to business, and, like a true perfumer, he totally disapproved of a revolution which caused the suppression of powder. Realizing that an absolute form of government alone could put money upon a safe and

tranquil basis, he became a most devoted royalist.

When Monsieur Ragon saw that his words had produced the desired impression, he promoted César to be his head clerk, and initiated him into the secrets of his shop, some of the customers of which were among the most active and devoted emissaries of the Bourbons. The place was the headquarters for the correspondence between Paris and the West; and, urged on by the ardor of youth, César threw himself heart and soul into the conspiracy which the royalists and terrorists had formed for the 13th Vendémiaire, against the expiring Convention.

He had the glory of fighting against Napoleon upon the steps of Saint-Roch, and was wounded at the very beginning of the affair. Every one knows the result of this attempt. César escaped only by reason of his insignificance, and the warlike clerk of the "Reine des Roses" was carried by some friends to his home, where he remained, cared for by Madame Ragon, and forgotten by the world. But this his first exploit of military courage was also his last. During his month of convalescence he had the opportunity to make some enduring reflections upon the unsuitability of mingling politics with perfumery; and while he resolved to remain a royalist, he determined to remain simply a royalist perfumer, without yielding both body and soul to his party.

After the 18th Brumaire, Monsieur and Madame Ragon, despairing of the success of the royal cause, decided to give up the perfumery business, and to live as respectable citizens, without concerning themselves further about politics. Desiring to find a purchaser for their stock who should possess more honesty than ambition, more sterling good sense than business enterprise, Ragon proposed the matter to his clerk. But Birotteau, who at twenty years of age possessed an income of a thousand francs, from money invested in the public funds, hesitated. His ambition was to live near Chinon, as soon as he should become the possessor of an income of fifteen hundred francs, and the First Consul should have consolidated the public debt by establishing himself at the Tuileries; and he asked himself why he should risk his honest and simple independence in the chances of business? He never expected to earn such a sum of money as he needed to carry out his plans, and his idea had been to marry some girl in Touraine, who had as much money as he, in order to be able to buy and cultivate les Trésorières. He had coveted the little estate ever since he was old enough to know anything about it, and dreamed of adding to it in time, and of leading on it a happy and obscure life. He was about to refuse Ragon's offer, when love changed suddenly all his resolutions, by increasing tenfold the sum of his desires.

One beautiful June day, on entering the Ile Saint Louis by the Pont Marie, the head clerk of the "Reine des Roses" saw a young girl standing at the door of a shop situated at the corner of the Quai d'Anjou. Constance Pillerault was the head young lady in a novelty shop called the "Petit Matelot," the first of those stores which have since sprung up in Paris with painted signs, waving banners, show-windows full of swinging shawls, cravats arranged like card-houses, and a thousand other commercial seductions, with illusions and optical effects carried to such a degree of perfection that the very shop-shutters have become commercial poems.

The low price of all the so-called novelties which were to be found at the "Petit Matelot" gave it a renown unheard of before in that part of Paris which was the least favorable for fashion and commerce; and the head saleswoman was often quoted for her beauty.

César Birotteau, lodged between Saint Roch and the Rue de la Sourdière, and exclusively occupied with his perfumeries, had not even suspected the existence of the "Petit Matelot"; for the small trades of Paris are very often strangers to each other. César was so violently impressed by Constance's beauty, that he rushed at once into the shop, to buy a half a dozen linen shirts, the price of which he disputed for a long time, making her un-

fold quantities of linen, as if he were an Englishwoman out on a shopping expedition.

The young lady deigned to wait upon César, perceiving, by certain signs with which every woman is acquainted, that he was there much less for the sake of what was sold to him than for the sake of the one who sold it. He dictated his name and address to her, but she seemed very indifferent to the admiration of the customer after the bargain was concluded. The poor youth showed to little advantage, for love seemed to take away all his wits; he dared scarcely say a word, and was too bewildered to notice the indifference which had so rapidly succeeded to the smiles of the siren.

For a whole week he went and stood sentry before the "Petit Matelot," watching for a look, as a dog watches for a bone at a kitchen door; careless of the mocking jests with which he was greeted, moving humbly aside to make room for purchasers and passers by, and attentive to all the routine of the shop. Some days later he again entered the paradise where his angel dwelt, this time less for the purpose of buying some handkerchiefs than of communicating a brilliant idea to the object of his adoration.

"If you want any perfumery, mademoiselle," he said, as he paid for his purchase, "I shall be happy to furnish you with some."

Constance Pillerault, whose heart was as pure as her forehead was white, did not deign to receive César's attentions until after six months of the marching and countermarching by which he testified his indefatigable love, and even then she declined to commit herself to anything decisive, but referred him to her uncle, Monsieur Claude Joseph Pillerault, a hardware merchant on the Quai de la Ferraille, who looked upon the lover with approval.

Lack of space forbids us to enlarge upon the joys of this love-tale, or to dilate upon the various extravagances in which César indulged:—melons purchased at the very beginning of the season; nice little dinners, followed by the play; or parties made up to ride out into the country on Sundays.

Without being handsome, there was nothing unattractive or repulsive about the young clerk which should prevent any woman from wanting to marry him. Life in Paris, and his sojourn in a darkened shop, had taken away the fiery glow of his ruddy, peasant complexion; his abundant black hair, his strong neck and shoulders, his large, sturdy limbs, and his simple, honest manner, were all in his favor; and Uncle Pillerault, burdened with the responsibility of watching over the happiness of his brother's child, sanctioned the pretensions of the young man, after having made various inquiries concerning him. In the year 1800, in the merry month of May, Mademoiselle Pillerault consented to marry César Birotteau, who nearly fainted for joy when, under a linden-tree at Sceaux, Constance Barbe Josephine promised to be his wife.

"My dear child," said Uncle Pillerault to her, "you are going to have a good husband. He has a warm heart, and the most honorable sentiments; he is perfectly frank, and wise beyond his years. In short, he is a prince among men."

At this time Constance was eighteen years old, and the possessor of eleven thousand francs. César, who was inspired by love with a boundless ambition, bought the stock of the "Reine des Roses," and moved it to a fine house near the Place Vendome; and thus, at the age of twenty-one, married to a beautiful and adored wife, and master of an establishment of which he had already paid three-fouths of the price, what wonder that the future appeared bright and inviting to him, particularly when he looked back over the road which he had traveled since starting out?

Roguin, the notary whom Ragon was in the habit of employing, and who drew César's marriage contract, gave the new perfumer some good advice, and prevented him from finishing the payment of his property with his wife's dowry.

"Keep something for a nest-egg, my boy," he said to him; and Birotteau looked upon him with admiration, and

fell into the habit of seeking his advice; and they finally became great friends. Like Ragon and Pillerault, he had so much faith in notaries, that he gave himself up to Roguin entirely, without a suspicion; and, thanks to his advice, César, being now furnished with Constance's eleven thousand francs with which to begin business, would not have exchanged his prospects for those of Napoleon himself, brilliant as the First Consul's future appeared to be.

At first, Birotteau kept only one servant, and lodged on the first floor above the shop, in a small room which had been fitted up for the young couple and where they dwelt in one long honeymoon. Madame César made a great sensation behind her counter; her celebrated beauty had an enormous influence upon the sales, and the beautiful Madame Birotteau was everywhere talked about.

Although César was accused of being a royalist, everybody acknowledged his honesty; and if some neighboring merchants envied his happiness, they at least believed him to be worthy of it. The blow which he had received upon the steps of Saint Roch gave him the reputation of being a man who was mixed up with political intrigues, and who was full of courage, although in reality he had at heart no military courage at all, and not a solitary political idea in his brain.

Upon these suppositions, the honest people of the neighborhood named him captain of the National Guard, but he was discharged by Napoleon, who, according to Birotteau, had a spite against him on account of their meeting in the Vendémiaire. And so César had a lawful halo of persecution around him, which made him interesting in the eyes of his neighbors, and gave him a certain importance.

Such was then the state of affairs in this happy household, whose only anxiety was on account of the accidents of business.

During the first year, César Birotteau made his wife acquainted with all the details of the business, and she became a most accomplished saleswoman; for she seemed to have been created and put into the world for the purpose of enticing and cajoling customers. But the result, at the end of the first year, caused the ambitious perfumer to look rather grave; for he realized that, after all expenses were paid, it would take him at least twenty years to realize the modest capital of a hundred thousand francs, which was the goal of his desires. He therefore resolved to take measures to increase his fortune more rapidly, and as the first step toward that end, he determined to set up a manufactory in connection with his retail business. Contrary to the advice of his wife, he hired a barn-like building on some land in the neighborhood of the Temple, and painted on the front of it in large letters: "Manufactory of César Birotteau." Then he enticed from Grasse a workman who was to make soaps, essences, and Eau de Cologne, at half profits; but this only lasted for six months, and resulted in losses which César had to bear alone. Still hopeful, however, Birotteau vowed to achieve some result from his enterprise, solely to the end that he might not be reproached by his wife, to whom he afterward confessed that several times during this period, if he had not been restrained by his sense of religious duty, he should have thrown himself into the Seine.

Made low-spirited by several fruitless attempts, he was loitering along the boulevards one day, on his way to dinner, when, among several books advertised for sale at six sous upon a bookstall, his eyes were caught by this title, yellow with dust: "Abdeker, or the Art of Perserving Beauty." He took up the pretended Arab book, a sort of romance written by a physician of the preceding century, and opened at a page which discoursed of perfumes.

Leaning against a tree of the boulevard, in order to turn the pages at his leisure, he found a note treating of the variations in the different parts of the skin, and explaining how such and such a paste or soap would have different effects upon different skins. Birotteau im-

mediately bought the book, in which he saw a fortune. But, having very little confidence in his own judgment, he went to a celebrated chemist, Vauquelin, of whom he naïvely inquired the ingredients that were necessary to compose a double cosmetic which should produce effects suited to the different natures of the human skin.

True *savants*, men who are really great in the sense that they never obtain, while living, the renown which their immense amount of secret work deserves, are almost always kindly disposed toward struggling and timid men; and Vauquelin, being no exception to the rule, took the perfumer under his patronage, and permitted him to call himself the inventor of a paste for whitening the hands, the ingredients of which were really indicated to him by the chemist.

Birotteau called this cosmetic the Double Pâte des Sultanes, and in order to make the thing complete, he applied the ingredients of the paste for the hands to a wash for the complexion, which he called Eau Carminative. He imitated the system of the "Petit Matelot," in employing, for the first time in the annals of perfumery, various announcements and advertisements in every direction.

The Pâte des Sultanes and the Eau Carminative were heralded in polite and commercial circles by colored bills, headed by the words: "Approved by the Institute." This formula, employed for the first time, had a magical effect; and not only France, but the Continent, was paved with handbills, yellow, red, and blue, by the master of the "Reine des Roses." At a time when the East was the topic of conversation with everybody, to name a cosmetic Pâte des Sultanes was nothing short of inspiration; — an inspiration which might, to be sure, have come to an ordinary man as well as to a man of genius; but the public, always ready to judge by results, looked upon Birotteau as a superior person, even giving him credit for purposely composing the ridiculous phrases in which the prospectus was couched, and which contributed largely to its success; so that, although he had not intended any stupidity, he had the credit of knowing when to pretend to be stupid to good purpose. A copy of this prospectus has with difficulty been rescued from oblivion, and we give it here, entire:

"Double Pâte des Sultanes and Eau Carminative of César Birotteau. Wonderful Discovery. Approved by the French Institute.

"A paste for the hands and a wash for the face, giving a result superior to that obtained by Eau de Cologne, has for a long time been desired by the two sexes in Europe. After having consecrated long hours to the study of the skin of both sexes, who naturally place great value upon softness, pliability, brilliancy and velvet-like texture, Monsieur Birotteau, a perfumer well-known both in Paris and elsewhere, has discovered a Paste and a Wash, justly entitled, from the moment of their appearance, to be called wonderful, by the fashionable world of Paris. This Paste and this Wash possess astonishing faculties for acting upon the skin without prematurely wrinkling it, an effect which drugs heretofore thoughtlessly used, and invented by ignorance and cupidity, have never failed to produce.

"This discovery is based upon a difference in temperaments, which may be divided into two great classes. These are indicated by the color of the Paste and the Wash, which are red for the skins of persons of a lymphatic constitution, and white for those who have a sanguine temperament.

"The Paste is called Pâte des Sultanes, because this discovery had already been made by an Arab physician for the benefit of the seraglio. Upon the report of our celebrated chemist, Vauquelin, it has been approved by the Institute, together with the Wash, which is compounded upon the same principles that have dictated the composition of the Paste.

"This precious Paste, which breathes the most delicious perfume, causes the most rebellious freckles to disappear, whitens the most obstinate skin, and pre-

vents that perspiration of the hands with which so many women, as well as men, are afflicted.

"The Eau Carminative removes those slight pimples which are often so annoying to ladies; it freshens and vivifies the complexion by opening or closing the pores in accordance with the demands of temperament; and it has already acquired such renown for its power of arresting the ravages of time, that many ladies out of gratitude have named it 'The Friend of Beauty.'

"Eau de Cologne is purely and simply a common perfume, without any special efficacy, while the Double Pâte des Sultanes and the Eau Carminative are two compositions which operate together, without danger; which are possessed of balsamic odors delightful to heart and brain alike; which are as wonderful in their merit as in their simplicity; and which are among the greatest attractions ever offered to ladies and gentlemen.

"The daily use of the Wash removes the smarting caused by the steel of the razor; it prevents the lips from chapping, and causes them to be uniformly of a beautiful red; it effaces in a natural manner all trace of freckles, and gives tone and strength to the flesh. These effects produce a perfect condition of the skin, and thus tend to relieve those who suffer from headache, and to deliver them from this distressing malady. In short, the Eau Carminative, which may be employed by ladies throughout their toilet, prevents all disturbances of the skin, and does not interfere with the action of the tissues, while communicating to them a lasting velvet-like texture.

"Address, post-paid, Monsieur César Birotteau, successor to Ragon, former perfumer to Queen Marie Antoinette, at the 'Reine des Roses,' Rue Saint Honoré, Paris, near the Place Vendôme.

"The Paste is three livres per cake, and the Wash six livres per bottle.

"Monsieur Birotteau, to guard against counterfeits, warns the public that the Paste is enveloped in a paper bearing his signature, and that the bottles have a label blown into the glass."

The success of this enterprise, although César himself did not suspect it, was due to Constance, who advised him to send cases of the Eau Carminative and the Pâte des Sultanes to all perfumers in France and abroad, offering them thirty per cent discount if they would agree to take the two articles by the gross. The Paste and the Wash were in reality superior to other articles of the kind already in the market, and ignorant people were attracted by the alleged distinction between temperaments; the five hundred perfumers of France, won by the promised percentage, bought annually of Birotteau more than three hundred gross of the Paste and Wash apiece, which gave him an enormous profit on the whole quantity sold, and enabled him to buy the sheds and land in the neighborhood of the Temple, to build great manufactories and to decorate magnificently his shop of the "Reine des Roses;" his housekeeping began to show the effects of easier circumstances, and his wife ceased to tremble for the future.

In 1810, Madame César, foreseeing a rise in rents, urged her husband to make himself the principal tenant in the house of which they at present occupied only a small part, and to put their own rooms on the first floor. A lucky circumstance which occurred about his time prevented her from remonstrating upon the extravagant way in which he was pleased to fit up her apartment. The perfumer was elected judge at the Tribunal of Commerce. His honesty, his well-known delicacy, and the consideration with which he was treated by everybody, procured him this honor, which classed him henceforth among the notable business men of Paris.

To increase his knowledge and his fitness for the position, he rose at five o'clock in the morning and read reports of jurisprudence, and books which treated of commercial lawsuits. His sentiment of justice, his rectitude, and his honesty of purpose—qualities essential to the appreciation of the difficulties submitted to the decisions of the tribunal—made him one of the most esteemed among the

judges; and his very deficiencies contributed to his good reputation. Realizing his own inferiority, César readily deferred to the opinions of his colleagues, who were much flattered by the deferential way in which he listened to them; some sought the silent approbation of a man who had the reputation of being profound, because he was a good listener; others, delighted with his modesty and gentleness, praised him to the skies. They vaunted his kindness and his conciliatory spirit, and he was often chosen as arbiter in disputes where his good sense enabled him to make a just decision. During his term of office, he had a happy talent of mingling commonplaces and trite sayings in more or less rounded language, which, mildly uttered, passed among superficial people for eloquence, and thus made him additionally popular; but the tribunal took so much of his time, that his wife finally persuaded him to decline the honor.

About the year 1813, after successfully passing through their struggle with poverty, César's household commenced upon an era of prosperity which seemed destined to be uninterrupted. Monsieur and Madame Ragon, his predecessors, Uncle Pillerault, Roguin the notary, the Matifats, druggists in the Rue des Lombards, and dealers to the "Reine des Roses," Joseph Lebas, merchant-clothier, Judge Popinot, brother to Madame Ragon, Chiffreville, of the firm of Protez & Chiffreville, Monsieur and Madame Cochin, employed at the Treasury, the Abbé Loraux, confessor and spiritual director to the little coterie, and a few other persons, composed the circle of their friends.

In spite of the royalist proclivities of Birotteau, public opinion was in his favor, and he passed for a very rich man, although he only possessed a hundred thousand francs apart from his business. The regularity of his affairs, his precision, his habit of never owing anything, of never discounting his paper, and of always taking perfectly safe securities when he lent money, and his obliging disposition, gave him an enormous credit. He had in reality made a much larger sum of money, but his buildings and manufactories had absorbed a great amount.

His household expenses amounted to nearly twenty thousand francs a year, and besides all this, the education of Césarine, their only and idolized daughter, necessitated heavy outlays. Neither husband nor wife looked twice at money when it was a question of pleasing their daughter, from whom they had never been willing to be separated. Imagine the delight of the poor, low-born peasant, when he listened to his charming Césarine as she played on the piano a sonata of Steibelt's, or sang a ballad; when he saw her write the French language correctly; or admired her as she read a passage to him from Racine, dilating upon its beauties; or when he watched her drawing a landscape or making a water-color painting! What happiness it was for him to live again in such a pure and beautiful flower, which had not yet left the maternal stalk;—such an angel whose budding graces and early developments had been watched with passionate devotion; an only daughter, incapable of scorning her father because of his want of education.

When he came to Paris, César knew how to read, write and cipher, but his learning had stopped there, his laborious life having prevented him from acquiring any knowledge unconnected with the perfumery business. Mingling constantly with people to whom sciences and letters were matters of indifference, and who were only instructed in their own specialties; and having no time to devote to self-instruction, the perfumer became merely a practical man, inevitably adopting the language, the errors and the opinions of that class of people in Paris who admire Molière, Voltaire and Rousseau upon hearsay, and buy their books without reading them. According to the fixed belief of these people, Potier, Talma, and Mademoiselle Mars were millionaires ten times over, and did not live in the least like other people; the great tragedian ate his meat raw, and Mademoiselle Mars occasionally made a fricassee of her pearls, in imitation of some

celebrated Egyptian actress. The emperor had leathern pockets in his waistcoat, out of which he could take his snuff by the fistful, and he was in the habit of going on horseback at a furious gallop up the staircase of the orangery at Versailles. Authors and artists always died in the hospital, because of their eccentricities; moreover, they were always atheists, whom it was highly improper to receive at one's house. And astronomers always lived on spiders.

These luminous ideas upon the French language, dramatic art, politics, literature and science, explain the extent of the intelligence of this class of people. Now, a poet in passing along the Rue des Lombards, and catching the breath of some perfume or other, is immediately wafted in dreamy thought to Asia; struck by the brilliancy of the cochineal, he sees in it Brahminical poems; in looking upon unpolished ivory, he mounts in imagination upon the back of an elephant, in a muslin cage, and there makes love like the king of Lahore. But the small trader is serenely ignorant whence come and where grow the various products of which he makes use in his business. Birotteau the perfumer did not know one iota of either natural history or chemistry. In regarding Vauquelin as a great man, he looked upon him as an exception. He was like the retired grocer, who summed up a discussion as to how tea was procured, by saying: "Tea comes in two ways; by caravan or by Havre." According to Birotteau, aloes and opium could only be found by going to the Rue des Lombards, and the so-called rose-water of Constantinople was made, like Eau de Cologne, at Paris. These names of places were neither more nor less than fibs invented to please the French, who could not endure things made in their own country. A French merchant was obliged to call his discovery after some English name, in order to make it popular, just as in England a druggist attributes his wares to France.

Nevertheless, it was impossible for César to appear utterly stupid; honesty and goodness cast upon the deeds of his life a reflection which rendered them respectable; for a fine action covers all possible ignorance. His constant success, moreover, gave him assurance, and in Paris, assurance is accepted for the power of which it is the sign.

Having learned to know César thoroughly during the first three years of their marriage, his wife was a victim to continual fears; she represented in this union the sagacious and foreseeing part, the doubt, the opposition, the mistrust; while César represented the audacity, the ambition, the action, the hopefulness which never dream of defeat.

But, in spite of appearances, it was the merchant himself who was the coward, while his wife in reality possessed both patience and courage. Thus, a weak-spirited man, commonplace, without instruction, ideas, knowledge or character, passed, by reason of his upright conduct, his ideas of justice, the goodness of a truly Christian soul, and love for his wife, for a remarkable man and one full of courage and resolution. The public saw only results. Excepting Pillerault and Judge Popinot, the persons of his acquaintance, seeing him only superficially, could not judge him.

Besides, the twenty or thirty friends who were in the habit of associating with each other all repeated the same stupidities and made the same commonplace remarks, and regarded each other as rather a superior sort of people. The women devoted themselves to good dinners and to their toilets, and none of them hesitated to speak of their husbands in rather a slighting, scornful tone. Madame Birotteau alone had the good sense to treat her husband with honor and respect in public; she saw in him the man who, in spite of secret incapacity, had made his own fortune, and whose consideration she shared. Only she asked herself sometimes what the world could be, if every so-called superior man resembled her husband. But her conduct contributed not a little to maintain the respectful esteem granted to César, in a country where women are only too prone to complain of and to decry their husbands.

III.

THE first days of the year 1814, so fatal to imperial France, were marked for the Birotteaus by two events. César had taken as head clerk a young man twenty-two years old, named Ferdinand du Tillet. This youth, who came from another perfumery establishment, which he left because he was refused a share in the profits, exerted himself strenuously to obtain a place at the "Reine des Roses," whose inhabitants and methods of management were well-known to him. Birotteau welcomed him kindly, and gave him a salary of a thousand francs, with the intention of making him his successor. Ferdinand had such an influence upon the destinies of the family that a few words concerning his former life will not be out of place.

In the first place, he possessed no family name. In 1793, a poor girl of Tillet, a small place near Andelys, gave birth to an infant in the garden of the curate of the church at Tillet, and after rapping upon the window-shutters of the good man's house, went away and drowned herself. The priest took the babe, gave it the name of the saint inscribed in the calendar for the day, and cared for it and brought it up like his own child.

The good priest, however, died in 1804, leaving an insufficient amount of property to finish the education which had been begun for the boy, who, thrown upon his own resources, led a roving life in Paris, where the chances of reaching the scaffold or fortune, the army, mercantile life or domesticity were equally balanced. Obliged to live like a true Figaro, he became traveling clerk, and then resident clerk to a Parisian perfumer, where he returned after having wandered all over France, studying the world, and making up his mind to succeed in it at any cost.

When he became of age, he found it necessary to have a name and a civil status, and legally obtained the surname of Du Tillet, under which he became known. Without father, mother or guardian, alone in the world, and accountable to no one, he felt himself at perfect liberty to treat the world as he pleased; he knew no other guide than his own interest, and all means of obtaining fortune seemed to him good.

This native of Normandy, armed with dangerous capacities, combined with his strong desire for success those faults attributed rightly or wrongly to the people of his province. Wheedling manners concealed his quarrelsome disposition; but although he audaciously contested the rights of others, he was not disposed to yield any of his own, and he governed his adversaries with an inflexible will. His principal merit consisted in that of the Scapins of the old comedy; he possessed their fertility of resource, their cleverness in keeping on the boundary line of unlawfulness without ever overstepping it, and their irrepressible desire to lay their hands on anything worth keeping. Endowed with a passionate activity, and with a military courage to demand good as well as bad from the world, justifying his demand upon the theory of personal interest, he had too much scorn for men, deeming them all corruptible, and too little delicacy as to the choice of means to attain his ends, not to succeed sooner or later. Such a man, placed between the galleys and millions, would become vindictive, autocratic, rapid in his resolves, but crafty as a Cromwell planning to behead honesty. At present only a perfumer's clerk, there were no limits to his ambition; and he enwrapped society in one comprehensive, malicious glance, saying to himself: "You will be mine!"

Physically, Ferdinand was a tall young man, of a good figure, and with variable manners which enabled him at will to take the range of all society. His lean face pleased at first sight; but upon closer acquaintance and inspection, strange expressions were often detected upon it, such as occasionally rise to the surface when conscience is in the habit of becoming uneasy. His bright complexion under his soft Normandy skin had a harsh, disagreeable tone. The glance of his particolored eyes was sharp and terrible, when he rested it full upon his victim. His voice was faint, like that of a man who has been

speaking for a long time. His thin lips were not badly formed; but his pointed nose and slightly convex forehead betrayed the defect in his pedigree. His hair was of a peculiar black which gave the appearance of having been dyed.

Birotteau perceived with profound astonishment that his clerk was in the habit of going out every evening, stylishly dressed, and of returning very late, and that he went to balls at the houses of bankers or lawyers. César was not pleased at this: in his opinion, clerks ought to study the business of their establishment, and attend exclusively to its affairs. He reproached Du Tillet gently for wearing too fine linen, and for having cards on which his name, "F. du Tillet," was engraved; a fashion which, in his commercial jurisprudence, belonged exclusively to people in high society.

Du Tillet, on the other hand, paid attentions to Madame César, and attempted to make love to her, and adopted with startling promptitude the same opinion of his master which she herself possessed. Although discreet and reserved, saying only what he pleased, Du Tillet yet unveiled his opinions upon men and life in such a manner as to startle a timorous woman who shared the religious opinions of her husband, and deemed it a crime to do the least evil to any one; and in spite of Madame Birotteau's tact, Du Tillet divined the scorn with which he inspired her. He had sent her several love-letters, and she soon perceived a change in his manner toward her, as if he were presuming upon some secret understanding; so, without imparting her reasons to her husband, she advised him to send the young man away.

Birotteau's wishes upon this point coincided with those of his wife, and the dismissal of the clerk was resolved upon. Three days before this resolution was carried into effect, however, Birotteau, in balancing his cash account for the month, was horrified to find a deficiency of three thousand francs. His consternation was extreme, not only on account of the loss itself, but because of the suspicion which must rest upon three clerks, a cook, a shop-boy and some hired workmen. Whom could he accuse? Madame Birotteau never left the counter. The clerk charged with the care of the money was a nephew of Monsieur Ragon, named Popinot, a young man nineteen years of age, who lodged with them, and was the very soul of honesty. But the figures, disagreeing with the sum on hand, proved the deficit, and showed that the money had been taken after the balance had been struck. The husband and wife resolved to say nothing of the matter, but to keep a strict watch over what went on in the house.

On the following day they received their friends; for the families which composed this *coterie* entertained each other in turn. When they were at cards, Roguin, the notary, put up some old louis which Madame César remembered to have received a few days previously, from a newly-married lady, Madame d'Espart.

The perfumer made some laughing remark in reference to them, and Roguin explained that he had received them from Du Tillet's banker; and Du Tillet confirmed the notary's reply, without a blush. The perfumer, however, blushed enough for both; and when the guests had departed, and Ferdinand was about to go to bed, Birotteau requested him to follow him into the shop, under pretext of speaking to him on business.

"Du Tillet," said the worthy man, "three thousand francs are missing from my safe, and I do not know whom to suspect; the circumstance of the old louis is too much against you for me to feel it right not to speak to you on the subject; so we will not go to bed without seeking and finding the error—for, after all, it can be only an error. Perhaps you only took something in advance of your salary, on account."

Du Tillet did in fact acknowledge to having taken the louis. The perfumer then sought for the record of the transaction in his books, but could find none.

"I was in a great hurry, but I ought to have made Popinot enter the sum for me," said Ferdinand.

"That is true," said Birotteau, secretly astounded by the cool indifference of the clerk, who knew well the sort of man with whom he had to deal.

The perfumer and his clerk passed the night in verifications which the worthy merchant knew all the time were useless. In going to and fro, César slipped three bank-bills of a thousand francs each into the safe, fixing them against the edge of the drawer, and then, feigning to be overcome by fatigue, he pretended to fall asleep, and began to snore. In a little while Du Tillet triumphantly awoke him, manifesting great joy at having discovered the mistake.

The next day Birotteau publicly reprimanded his wife and little Popinot, and appeared to be very angry at their negligence; and a fortnight later, Ferdinand du Tillet entered the employ of an exchange agent, saying that the perfumery business did not suit him, and he preferred to study banking. In leaving Birotteau's house, he strove to give Madame César the impression that her husband had dismissed him from motives of jealousy.

A few months later, Du Tillet came to see his former employer, and requested his security for twenty thousand francs, in order to complete the pledges which were required of him in an affair which was about to set him on the high-road to fortune. Remarking the surprise which Birotteau could not help manifesting at this effrontery, Du Tillet frowningly asked if he had no confidence in him. Both Matifat, and two gentlemen who were talking to Birotteau at the time, noticed the indignation of the perfumer, who, however, restrained his anger in their presence. "Possibly," he thought, "Du Tillet had reformed; he might have done wrong formerly because of desperation at losses at play, or something of the kind; public exposure might cast back into crime and evil a man still young, and possibly even now on the road to repentance and a better life." And so the good man took up his pen aud endorsed Du Tillet's bills, saying as he did so that it gave him great pleasure to be of this service to a young man who had been very useful to him; but he blushed as he uttered the words.

Du Tillet could not meet his former employer's eye, and in that moment doubtless vowed to him that undying hate which imps of darkness conceive for angels of light. From that time he kept his balance so cleverly on the tight-rope of speculation, that he always had at least the appearance of wealth and elegance, if not its reality. He set up a cabriolet as soon as possible, and maintained himself in the elevated sphere of those people who mingle pleasure with business, the Opera with the Bourse. Thanks to Madame Roguin, whom he had met at Birotteau's house, he was everywhere admitted without demur to the best financial society of the city; and at the moment when our story opens, Ferdinand du Tillet had arrived at a height of prosperity about which there was no room for doubt. Upon the best possible terms with the house of Nucingen, where Roguin had introduced him, he had promptly allied himself with the brothers Keller. No one seemed to know where he got the immense amount of capital with which he carried on his enormous operations, but people as a general thing attributed his good fortune to his intelligence and honesty.

The Restoration made an important personage of César, and the turbulence of the political crisis naturally drove the remembrance of these domestic disturbances from his mind. His unchanged royalist opinions, which had become of very secondary importance since his wound, but in which he still persisted, from a sense of decorum and the remembrance of his devotion on the Vendémiarie, caused him to receive high patronage, precisely because he asked for nothing. He was appointed chief of battalion in the National Guard, although he was incapable of giving a single word of command.

In 1815, Napoleon, always Birotteau's enemy, removed him; and during the Hundred Days, Birotteau became the *bête noire* of the liberals of his neighborhood; for in 1815, for the first time,

political schisms sprung up between the merchants, until then unanimous in their wishes for the peace so desirable from a business point of view.

At the second restoration, the royal government, in appointing a new set of municipal officers, nominated Birotteau for mayor; but, thanks to his wife, the perfumer accepted only the position of deputy, or assistant mayor, which brought him into less prominence. This evidence of modesty increased greatly the esteem in which he was universally held, and won for him the friendship of the mayor, Monsieur Flamet de la Billardiere. Birotteau, who had noticed him as one of those who were in the habit of coming to the "Reine des Roses" when that shop was used as a rendezvous for royalist conspirators, pointed him out to the Prefect of the Seine as a fit candidate for the office, when the latter came to him to ask his advice upon the matter.

And so it happened that Monsieur and Madame Birotteau were never forgotten in the mayor's invitations; and La Billardière took Birotteau's part warmly, when it was a question of distributing crosses to the municipal body, dwelling eloquently upon his wound received at Saint-Roch, his attachment to the Bourbons and the consideration which was universally accorded to him. The minister, desiring to attach to the Bourbons the representatives of commerce, art and science, accordingly granted the desired promotion to Birotteau. This favor, added to his present popularity, made him a person of great importance and consideration, and the knowledge of the promotion was the final argument which induced him to launch forth in the manner which he had indicated to his wife, in order the sooner to give up the perfumery business and rise to higher regions of Parisian society.

César was then forty years old. His uninterrupted attention to business had given him a few premature wrinkles, and had lightly silvered the thickly-growing hair which the constant pressure of his hat had glossed in a circular ring about his head. His forehead, upon which his hair grew in five points, showed the simplicity of his life. His heavy eyebrows did not have an alarming effect, for the mild blue eyes beneath them harmonized in their clear frankness with his honest forehead. His nose, broken at his birth, and large and rounded at the end, gave him an odd, astonished look, which his full lips and great straight chin only partially contradicted. His face, highly colored, and squarely outlined, showed by the disposition of the wrinkles, and the whole appearance of the physiognomy, the frankly-scheming peasant character; and the universal strength of the body, the great size of the limbs, the squareness of the back, and the large feet, all denoted the transplanted countryman. Indeed, his great hairy hands and square finger-nails would have attested his origin, if there had been no other proof.

His lips wore the genial smile which merchants adopt when a customer enters; but this business smile was also the visible sign of his inward content, and depicted the state of his kindly soul. His suspicion never went beyond his business affairs, and his shrewdness left him at the threshhold of the Bourse, or when he closed his great account-book. Distrust was to him exactly what his printed invoice bills were —a necessity of the sale itself.

His face offered a comical mixture of assurance, simplicity and good-humor, which redeemed it from being an exact type of the ordinary dull *bourgeois* countenance. Without this appearance of naïve admiration of, and faith in, himself, he would have been almost too worthy of respect, but he brought himself thus to the level of the rest of mankind, by contributing his share of the ridiculous to life.

When he was talking, he always clasped his hands behind his back. When he thought he had said something wise or witty, he would rise slightly upon the tips of his toes, and fall back heavily upon his heels, as if to emphasize his phrase. In the midst of a discussion he would sometimes turn quickly and walk away for a few steps, as if he were going in search of an argument, and then return abruptly

to his adversary. He never interrupted any one who was speaking, and often found himself a victim to his own politeness, for others were less scrupulous, and the worthy man would sometimes have to leave the place without getting a chance to say a word.

His large experience in commercial affairs had given him a few habits which some people regarded as nothing less than insane. If a note was not paid, he sent it to the sheriff, and concerned himself no more about it, except to receive principal, interest, and costs; the officer might pursue the debtor until he had made him bankrupt. But there César stopped all further proceedings, refused to attend any meetings of the creditors, and kept his deeds.

This system, and his implacable scorn for bankrupts, he got from Monsieur Ragon, who, in the course of his commercial life, had come to the conclusion that lawsuits were only a waste of time, and that the poor and uncertain dividend given by the bankrupt-certificate, was not worth the time and trouble wasted in getting it.

"If the brnkrupt is an honest man, and ever has a chance he will pay you," Monsieur Ragon used to say. "If he has no resources at all, and is simply and solely unfortunate, why torment him? And if he is a knave, you will never get anything, anyway."

César would keep an appointment with perfect punctuality; but ten minutes later, if he was kept waiting, he would go away again, with an inflexibility which nothing could bend; and so his own exactitude taught precision to those who had dealings with him.

The costume which he had adopted harmonized with his manners and appearance. No persuasion could induce him to give up his white muslin cravats, with the embroidered corners, which his wife or his daughter worked for him. His waistcoat of white piqué, buttoned high, he wore rather long over his somewhat prominent abdomen; for he was a little inclined to corpulence. He wore blue pantaloons, black silk stockings, and shoes tied with ribbons which were usually cŏming undone. His olive-green coat, always too large for him, and his broad-brimmed hat, made him look like a Quaker. When he was dressed for an evening company he wore silk small-clothes, shoes with gold buckles, and the inevitable waistcoat, the two top buttons of which, however, were on these occasions left undone, to show his ruffled shirt frill. His chestnut-colored coat had long, full skirts, and up to the year 1819 he wore two watch-chains, hanging side by side, one of which, however, he left off on ordinary occasions.

Such was César Birotteau, an honest man to whom the fates which preside at the birth of human beings had denied the power of judging life and politics as a whole, and of rising above the social level of the middle classes, who follow a certain routine in everything; all his opinions had been given to him, and he applied them without examination or question. He was stupid, but good; scarcely spiritual, yet deeply religious, he had a pure heart: and in this heart burned a single love, the light and the strength of his life; for his desire to rise in the world, and the few ideas which he had acquired, all came from his love for his wife and daughter.

As for Madame César, then thirty-seven years old, the resemblance between her and the statue of the Venus de Milo was so striking that every one who saw her could not fail to remark it. But in a few months, grief and adversity so promptly laid their yellow tints on her dazzling whiteness, and hollowed black circles beneath her wonderful, green eyes, that she grew rather to resemble some ancient Madonna; for even in the midst of ruin she still preserved a gentle sweetness, and a pure though sad expression which made it impossible to think of her as otherwise than beautiful. But at the ball which César was planning, she was destined to dazzle everybody with a final glow of her marvelous beauty.

Every existence has its apogee, its point where causes and effects exactly accord with each other. This noontide of life,

where living forces find their equilibrium, is common not only to organic beings, but to cities, nations, ideas, institutions, commerce, and all undertakings which, like noble races and dynasties, have their beginning, growth, and downfall. History, in relating the causes of grandeur and decadence in everything here below, might perhaps warn a man when to foresee his own downfall; but nothing living would listen to the warning voice.

César Birotteau, who might now be considered at the apogee of his fortune, mistook this resting-place for a new point of departure.

IV.

When César fell asleep, it was with the fear that with daylight his wife would raise peremptory objections to his plans; and he therefore decided to get up very early and arrange everything. Accordingly he arose when it was scarcely more than daybreak, went out of the room noiselessly, leaving his wife still sleeping, dressed himself swiftly and went downstairs to the shop, just as the shop-boy was taking down the shutters. Birotteau, seeing that he was alone, went and stood on the doorstep, while he waited for the clerks to appear, and watched the boy who was named Raguet, to see how he acquitted himself of his duties—and César knew from experience how they should be performed. In spite of the cold, the weather was superb.

At length Anselme appeared.

"Popinot," said his master, "go and get your hat and put on your shoes, and call Monsieur Célestin. You and I will take a little walk as far as the Tuileries."

Popinot, an admirable contrast to Du Tillet, plays such an important part in this story that a short description of him will not be out of place here.

Madame Ragon's maiden name was Popinot. She had two brothers. One of them, the youngest of the family, was at this time judge of the tribunal of the Seine. The elder had undertaken to deal in wool, had lost all his fortune in the business, and finally died, leaving in charge of the Ragons and of his brother the judge, who had no children, his only son, whose mother was already dead. To start her nephew in life, Madame Ragon had put him into the perfumery business, hoping to see him ultimately Birotteau's successor.

Anselme Popinot was small, and club-footed; an infirmity which chance bestowed upon Lord Byron, Walter Scott, and Talleyrand, as if in encouragement of those who are similarly afflicted. He had the bright and freckled complexion which distinguishes red-headed people; but his pure forehead, his eyes of the color of gray, veined agates, his beautiful mouth, and the grace of a modest youthfulness, together with the timidity caused by his malformation, all inspired interest in him; for he was weak, and needed protection; therefore he was interesting.

Little Popinot, as everybody called him, came from an essentially religious family, whose virtues were intelligent, and whose life was modest and full of good deeds. And so the child, brought up by his uncle the judge, united in himself all those qualities which make youth so beautiful; wise and affectionate, a little shy, but full of eagerness, gentle as a lamb, but courageous at work, devout and steady, he was endowed with all the virtues of a Christian of the early ages.

When Monsieur Birotteau spoke of a walk to the Tuileries, a most eccentric proposition to come from his imposing patron at this hour in the morning, Popinot thought that he must be intending to speak to him about his settlement in life; and the clerk's thoughts suddenly flew to Césarine, the true Queen of Roses, the living sign of the establishment, whom he had loved from the moment he had entered Birotteau's house, two months before Du Tillet. As he went up the stairs, he was obliged to stop for a moment, to quiet the violent beating of his heart.

He soon came down again, followed by Célestin, Birotteau's head clerk; and then Anselme and his patron took their

way toward the Tuileries without a word.

Popinot was then twenty-one years old. Birotteau himself had married at that age, and Anselme could therefore see no impediment to his own marriage with Césarine, although the large fortune of the father, and the beauty of the daughter, were immense obstacles to the realization of such ambitious desires; but love lives on hope; and the farther removed from him did the lady appear to be, the stronger grew his desire to possess her. In spite of his doubts and uncertainty he was happy; for did he not see Césarine every day? In going about his daily work he infused into it a zeal and ardor which took away all bitterness from toil; for everything done for the sake of Césarine was done easily. In a young man of twenty years, love feeds on its own devotion.

"He will be a success in the world," said his employer to Madame Ragon, praising Anselme's activity about the shop, and his aptitude at learning all the intricacies of the business, and recalling the briskness of his work in moments of hurry, when, with bared arms, the lame boy would pack and nail up more cases of goods than any of the other clerks.

The known and acknowledged pretensions of Alexander Crottat, Roguin's chief clerk, whose father was a rich farmer of la Brie, were formidable obstacles to the orphan youth; but even these difficulties were not the greatest with which he had to contend; deep in his heart were buried secrets which increased the distance between Césarine and himself. Ragon's fortune, on which he might reasonably have counted, was much involved, and Anselme had the happiness of being able to aid them by bringing to them his slender wages. And yet he dreamed of success. He had several times surprised glances of apparent pride in him, from Césarine's eyes; and in their blue depths he had dared to read a secret thought full of caressing hopes. And so he went on, hopeful and industrious, but thus far shy and silent upon the bright subject of his thoughts.

"Popinot," said the worthy merchant to him at last, "is your aunt pretty well?"

"Yes, sir," he replied.

"But she has appeared to be anxious for some time, as if all were not going well with her? Listen, boy! there is no need of making a mystery of things to me; you know I am a sort of relative, for I have known your Uncle Ragon for twenty-five years. I went into his employment when I first came from my native village, a great clodhopper of a boy, my only fortune a louis d'or which had been given me by my god-mother, the late Marchioness of Uxelles, a relative of Monsieur the Duke and Madame the Duchess of Lenoncourt, who are among our customers. And so I pray every Sunday for her and all her family; and I supply her niece in Touraine, Madame de Morsauf, with all her perfumery. They are continually sending me customers, as, for instance, Monsieur de Vandenesse, who buys twelve hundred francs' worth a year. Now there is such a thing as gratitude from motives of policy, and not out of goodness of heart; but I wish you well, on your own account, and without any hidden motive."

"Ah, sir, you have, if you will permit me to say so, a fine headpiece," murmured the clerk respectfully.

"No, my boy, no, that is not all that is necessary," replied César. "I won't say that my headpiece is not as good as another's, but besides that, I have been honest and open, and I have never loved any woman except my wife. Love is a famous vehicle, my boy."

"Love!" said Popinot. "Oh, sir, do you—"

"Hallo! there is Roguin himself coming on foot from the Place Louis XV., at eight o'clock in the morning. What is the man doing there?" said César, forgetting all about Anselme Popinot and the oil of nuts.

His wife's suspicions recurred to his mind, and instead of entering the garden of the Tuileries, Birotteau advanced toward the notary. Anselme followed his master at a little distance, without

being able to explain to himself the sudden interest which he felt in an occurrence of such apparent unimportance, but very happy over the encouragement which he extracted from César's remarks concerning the louis d'or, and love.

Roguin, a tall, large man, with a high forehead and black hair, had formerly been very good-looking; but a life of immorality and dissipation had set its seal upon him, and to a keen observer its traces were plainly to be seen; for when a man plunges into the mud, he cannot avoid soiling himself with its contact. His excesses and mode of life had made large drains upon his fortune, so that, besides mortgaging his property, he had drawn upon the moneys intrusted to his charge by clients, to an alarming extent.

Du Tillet, who had wormed himself, by one means and another, into all the secrets of his employer, now saw his way to profit by the situation. Roguin, who was in despair, and ready to blow out his own brains, was reassured by his clerk's confident assertion that he could yet make everything go well, and he therefore decided to give up the idea of suicide for the present.

Du Tillet's plan was this: he advised the notary to take a sufficiently large sum, and risk it either at the Bourse, or in some one of the speculations then so plentiful in the city. If he won, they were to set up a banking-house together, out of which Roguin could make enough money to satisfy his desires and pleasures. If, on the other hand, the speculation should fail, and the money be lost, Roguin could go and live abroad, instead of killing himself, and his dear Du Tillet would be faithful to him, to the last sou. It was like a rope thrown to a drowning man, but Roguin was not keen enough to perceive that it was passed around his own neck.

Master of Roguin's secrets, Du Tillet used his knowledge for his own ends, and held the notary completely in his power. He took the money, which Roguin had obtained from his wife, the only daughter of the rich banker Chevrel, and risked it at the Bourse; but he had the audacity to choose for an adversary a confederate, who returned to him the greater part of what to Roguin were represented as losses; so that Du Tillet, by the operation, came to possess a nice little sum of his own. Roguin, in the meantime, regarded his young friend as nothing less than an angel, for he had saved him from ruin, and furnished him with a large sum of money besides.

About this time, Du Tillet went abroad on a confidential mission for a usurer, named Gobseck, to whom he had made himself useful on two or three occasions, and who was at this time in need of a young and clever man to watch over something that was going on in Germany.

An auditor at the council of State, surprised at the return of the Bourbons, had conceived the idea, in order to get himself into royal favor, of going to Germany and buying up the debts contracted by the princes during their residence abroad. He offered the profits of the venture, to him purely a political speculation, to any one who would furnish him with sufficient funds to carry it on. The usurer declined to supply the money without inquiring further into the affair, and sent Du Tillet and Monsieur Clement Chardin of the Lupcaulx, to keep an eye to what was going on. Du Tillet, always intent upon his own interests, agreed to go, on condition that some of his own money should be invested in the matter. He remained away during the Hundred Days, and returned at the time of the second restoration, having augmented his chances for making a fortune yet more than his fortune itself; for he was now in the secrets of some of the cleverest calculators in Paris.

Upon his return, he found Roguin wild with impatience to see him, for the notary had again squandered his money, and knew not where to turn. He was helpless, and in Du Tillet's power; and the latter counseled him to involve some of his wealthiest clients in a speculation out of which he could make a sufficient sum of money to go on as before; and it was Du Tillet who conceived the idea of

the speculation concerning the lands situated in the neighborhood of the Madeleine.

Naturally the hundred thousand francs placed by Birotteau with Roguin to be invested were among the first to be handed over to Du Tillet, who, ardently desiring the ruin of the perfumer, made Roguin understand that he ran less danger by taking his intimate friends in the net.

"A friend," he said to him, "preserves his regard even in the midst of his anger."

Few people realize now of how little value the land around the Madeleine was at that day. Du Tillet wished to be in a position to reap the benefits of the proceeding without enduring the losses of a speculation lasting a long time. He had no friend upon whom to call for assistance, and therefore felt the necessity of procuring a living manikin, a tool, a cat's-paw;—in short, what is termed in commercial language a *man of straw*. His supposed adversary of the Bourse occurred to him as a fitting person for this position; and he forthwith encroached upon divine rights to the extent of creating an individual. He chose a former traveling clerk, without either means or talents, except that of talking indefinitely upon any kind of subject without ever saying anything worth hearing. He was without a sou or a possession, and was capable of playing a part without ruining the piece; he was a man full of the rarest kind of honor, namely, that which is capable of keeping a secret and allowing its possessor to be dishonored, to the profit of a confederate, and out of him Du Tillet manufactured a banker who undertook and directed the greatest enterprises, the head of the firm of Claparon.

Charles Claparon's destiny was, to be delivered some day into the hands of Jews and Pharisees, if the business started by Du Tillet required a bankruptcy; and Claparon knew it. But, for a poor wretch who had been wandering disconsolately along the boulevards with only forty sous in his pocket, and no prospect of getting any more, when Du Tillet met him, the small perquisites which would fall to him in the affair seemed like a perfect Eldorado. And so his friendship and devotion for Du Tillet, strengthened by an unreflecting gratitude, and further incited by the needs of a spendthrift life, made him agree to everything. And then, after having sold his honor, he beheld in Du Tillet so much prudence as well as daring, that he ended by becoming as firmly attached to his former comrade as a dog to his master.

In the actual combination he was to represent one half of the owners of the land, as César Birotteau was to represent the other half. The values which Claparon would receive from Birotteau would be discounted by one of the usurers whose name Du Tillet could borrow, to precipitate Birotteau into the abysses of a failure, when Roguin should take away his money. The assignees of the failure would act under Du Tillet's instructions, and he, possessed of the money given under different names by the perfumer and his creditor, would have the land sold at auction, and would buy it for half its value, paying for it with Roguin's money and the dividend of the bankruptcy.

The notary entered into the plan, believing that he would have a good slice of the precious spoils of the perfumer and his associates; but the man into whose hands he was playing intended the lion's share for himself; and Roguin, not being able to accuse Du Tillet before any tribunal, was destined by that worthy to be contented with the bones thrown to him from month to month in the depths of Switzerland. Circumstances, and no invention of a tragic author meditating an intrigue, had engendered this horrible scheme. Hate without the desire for vengeance is like a grain of wheat dropped upon granite; but vengeance, vowed by Du Tillet against César, was one of the most natural things in the world, unless we are disposed to deny the antagonism of evil spirits to angels of light. It would be very inconvenient for Du Tillet to assassinate the only man in Paris who knew him to be guilty of a theft, but he had the power to overthrow him and to put him in a position where his testimony would

be of no avail. For a long time vengeance had germinated in his heart without flowering, for want of opportunity; but when he had worked his way into Roguin's confidence he had vaguely seen the possibility of destroying César thereby, and he was not mistaken.

When a man makes up his mind to play the part that Du Tillet had assigned to Roguin, he involuntarily becomes an actor, with the eye of a lynx and the penetration of a clairvoyant; and so it was that the notary had perceived Birotteau long before Birotteau had seen him, and when the perfumer at length looked at him, he held out his hand long before they met.

"I have just been to draw up a will for a nobleman who has not a week to live," he said, with a perfectly natural manner; "but they have treated me as they would a village physician; they sent a carriage for me, but I am left to make my way back on foot."

These words caused a light shadow of suspicion, which Roguin had observed, to disappear from the perfumer's brow; but the notary took care not to be the first to introduce the subject of the land speculation; he could well afford to wait until the other spoke.

"After wills come marriage contracts," said Birotteau. "Such is life. And by the way, when are we to marry the Madeleine, eh, Roguin?" and he poked him facetiously in the ribs.

"If it is not done to-day," replied the notary significantly, "it never will be. We are already afraid that the thing will get noised abroad, and I have been strongly urged by two of my richest clients to allow them to enter into the speculation. So you can take it or leave it, as you please. I shall draw up the deeds this noon, and you will not have the privilege of signing them, after one o'clock. Adieu. I must go and read over the minutes which Xandrot was to get ready last night."

"Well, it is agreed; you have my word," said Birotteau, running after the notary and touching him upon the shoulder. "Take the hundred thousand francs which I intended for my daughter's dowry."

"Very well," replied Roguin, and he walked away.

V.

When Birotteau returned to Popinot he was violently agitated, and his ears were filled with a dull ringing sound.

"What is the matter, sir?" asked the clerk, noticing that his master looked pale.

"Ah, my boy," replied the perfumer, "I have just concluded with one word a most important matter, and no one can control his emotions at such a time. Besides, you are not a stranger, and I do not mind your noticing. I brought you out here so that we might be free to talk, where no one could listen to us. Your aunt appears troubled; tell me, has she lost all her money?"

"Sir, my uncle and aunt had their money placed with Monsieur de Nucingen, but they were obliged to draw it out to pay for some operations in the mines of Wortschin, which do not yet give any dividends; and it is hard for old people like them to live on hope."

"But what do they have to support them?" asked César.

"They have been good enough to accept my salary," replied the young man, modestly.

"Good! well done, Anselme," said the perfumer, without trying to conceal the tears which rose to his eyes; "you are worthy of the affection which I feel for you. You shall receive a rich reward for your diligent application to my affairs."

When he spoke these words, the merchant grew as great in his own eyes as he seemed in those of Popinot.

"What!" gasped the youth; "you have guessed my passion for—"

"For whom?" said the perfumer.

"For Mademoiselle Césarine," replied the trembling clerk.

"Ah, boy, you are very bold," cried Birotteau. "But keep your secret well,

and I promise to forget it also. I don't blame you for it; in your place I should have done the same thing. She is so beautiful!"

"Ah, monsieur!" said the young man, piteously.

"My boy," returned the other, kindly, "this is not a thing to be settled in a day; Césarine is her own mistress, and her mother has her own views for her. So go home, and wipe your eyes, keep yourself well under control, and never speak of this. I should not be ashamed to have you for a son-in-law; as nephew of Monsieur Popinot, a judge of the tribunal, and nephew also of the Ragons, you have as much right to try and make your own way as any one else; however, there are 'buts' and 'fors' and 'ifs' in the case to be considered. But what in the world made you drag this subject into a business conversation? Here, let us sit down on this chair, and allow the lover to give place to the clerk. Popinot," he continued, looking earnestly at his companion, "are you a man of stout heart? Have you the courage to struggle with something stronger than yourself, and to fight it face to face?"

"Yes, sir," replied Popinot, simply.

"To keep up a long and dangerous combat?" continued the perfumer.

"What is it?" asked Popinot, prudently.

"To rival and annihilate the 'Huile de Macassar'!" said Birotteau, rising to his feet like one of Plutarch's heroes. "Do not let us deceive ourselves; the enemy is strongly intrenched and very formidable. The 'Huile de Macassar' has been well managed, and the idea is clever. The square bottles have an originality of form. I have thought of making ours triangular in shape; but I think, after mature deliberation, that I prefer little bottles of thin glass, covered with wicker-work."

"That is expensive," said Popinot. "The thing ought to be done at as little cost as possible, in order to be able to give good profits to the retail dealers."

"That's true, my boy," replied his employer; "you have the right idea of it. But think carefully: the 'Huile de Macassar' will make a good fight; it is specious, and has an attractive name. It is offered as a foreign importation, while ours will have the misfortune to hail from our own country. Come, Popinot, do you feel capable of killing the Macassar? We shall have to fight it, and to carry the war into the provinces. It has been well advertised, and we cannot deny its power; it is on the market, and the public are well acquainted with it."

"I will conquer it," cried Popinot, fired with ambition.

"With what?" asked Birotteau. "That is just like the impetuosity of young people! Now listen to me until I have finished."

Anselme immediately took a position as if he were a soldier presenting arms to a marshal of France.

"Popinot," said his master, impressively, "I have invented an oil for making the hair grow and for preventing it from fading. This extract will be just as successful as my Paste and my Wash; but I do not care to introduce it myself, for I am thinking of retiring from business. It is you, my boy, who will give to the world my Huile Comagène (from *coma*, a Latin word which means hair, as Monsieur Alibert, the king's physician, says. The word occurs in the tragedy of 'Berenice,' where Racine has introduced a king of Comagène, a lover of the beautiful queen who was so celebrated for her wealth of hair, and out of compliment to whom he doubtless named his kingdom; which shows what wit great geniuses have; they even descend to details)."

Little Popinot had some difficulty in keeping his countenance at this remarkable explanation, but he succeeded bravely, and his master continued:

"Anselme," he said, "I have decided to set you up in business as a first-class druggist in the Rue des Lombards. I will be your secret partner, and will lend you the money to start with. Besides the Huile Comagène, we will try essences of vanilla and mint. In short, we will go into the drug trade, and improve upon it, by selling concentrated products in place

of natural ones. Now, my ambitious young friend, are you satisfied?"

Anselme could not reply, but the tears which filled his eyes answered for him. The offer seemed to imply a paternal blessing, and to say: "Become rich and influential, that you may deserve Césarine."

"Sir," he said finally, mistaking Birotteau's sympathetic emotion for astonishment at his silence, "I will succeed."

"That is just like me," exclaimed the perfumer; "I need not say another word. And at any rate, if you do not have my daughter, you will at least make your fortune."

"Let me hope," said the young man, earnestly, "that in obtaining one I may win the other."

"I cannot prevent you from hoping, my friend," said Birotteau, touched by Anselme's tone.

"Very well, sir," continued the clerk, after a moment, "may I then begin today to look for a shop, in order to commence immediately?"

"Yes, my boy," replied César. "To-morrow we will shut ourselves up in the manufactory. But before going to the Rue des Lombards, I want you to go to Livingston's to see if my hydraulic press will be ready for use to-morrow. To-night, we will go, at dinner-time, to the celebrated and good Monsieur Vauquelin to consult him. He has recently been studying into the composition of the hair, its coloring-matter and whence it proceeds, and its general texture. Now, there you are, Popinot! You will know my secret, and all we will have to do will be to introduce it intelligently. But before you go to Livingston's, go to Pieri Bérnard's. My boy, Monsieur Vauquelin's disinterestedness is one of the great griefs of my life: it is impossible to get him to accept anything. Luckily, I have heard through Chiffreville that he wanted a Dresden Madonna, engraved by a certain Muller; and after two years of correspondence, Bérnard has at last succeeded in finding it. It cost fifteen hundred francs, my boy! And to-day our benefactor will see it in his antechamber when he shows us out, for you will see to it that it is already framed. And thus my wife and I will recall ourselves to his remembrance, and show our gratitude to him for his kindness during the sixteen years we have known him, every day of which we have prayed the Lord to bless him. For my part, I shall never forget him; but Popinot, these wise men have so many things to think of, that they are apt to forget everybody, friends, wives, all. So, if we do not have as much intelligence, we can at lease preserve a warmer heart than they; and that is some consolation for not being a great man. Monsieur Vauquelin is always either in his cabinet or his laboratory, and I like to think that he meditates upon God while analyzing his work; but you never see these gentlemen of the Institute at a church.

"Now, this is our agreement: I will furnish you with funds and leave you in possession of my secret, and we will share equally in the profits. There is no need to draw up a deed. And then for success! Now go, my boy, for I have a great deal of business to attend to. Stay! one word more, Popinot. I am thinking of giving a great ball, and I want you to have a suit of clothes made, and make your appearance as a full-fledged merchant."

This last kindness overthrew Popinot's self-control completely, and he seized Birotteau's hand and kissed it rapturously.

"Poor boy," thought César, as he watched him hurrying through the Tuileries; "if Césarine only loved him! but he is lame, and has hair the color of a copper basin, and young people are so peculiar, I don't much believe that Césarine— And then her mother is bent upon seeing her the wife of a notary. Alexander Crottat will make her rich; and wealth makes everything else bearable, while there is no happiness which will not yield to poverty. At all events, I am determined to let my daughter do exactly as she pleases, no matter what happens."

Birotteau's next door neighbor was a little umbrella and cane merchant, named Cayron, a native of Languedoc, who had been already assisted by Birotteau several times, when he had got into difficulties in

his business. Cayron asked nothing better than to confine himself to his shop, and to give up to the wealthy perfumer his rooms on the first floor, thereby greatly diminishing his rent.

"Well, neighbor," said Birotteau familiarly, as he entered the umbrella merchant's shop soon after; "my wife consents to the increase in our establishment, and so, if you are ready, we will go and see Monsieur Molineux at eleven o'clock."

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," replied the umbrella merchant, "I have never asked anything of you for this concession, but you know that a good business man ought to make a little money whenever he can."

"But I am not a millionaire," replied the perfumer. "And I don't know, after all, whether my architect, whom I am expecting to see this morning, will find the thing at all practicable. Before concluding the bargain, he told me to be sure and ascertain whether your floors were on a level with ours. Then, it will be necessary to obtain Monsieur Molineux's consent to cutting through the wall, and there may be a middle wall besides. And then I shall have to turn my own staircase around, and change the landing-place, in order to make the floors come even. So you see there are plenty of expenses already, and I don't want to ruin myself."

"Oh, sir!" returned the other, "you can no more be ruined than the sun can come down from the heavens!"

Birotteau caressed his chin, rising on tip-toe and falling back on his heels the while.

"Besides," continued Cayron, "I only ask you to take these notes—"

And he handed him a memorandum of five thousand francs, composed of sixteen notes.

"Ah!" said the perfumer, running them over between his thumb and finger; "for two months, three months—"

"Only take them of me at six per cent," implored the little merchant, humbly.

"Do you think I am a usurer?" asked the perfumer, reproachfully.

"Oh, sir," said the other, "I went to your former clerk, Du Tillet, but he refused to take them at any price; probably wishing me to make him a very low offer."

"I don't know these signatures," said the perfumer.

"We have such queer names, in the cane and umbrella trade," replied Cayron. "These are traveling-agents."

"Well," said César, "I won't say that I will take all of them, but perhaps I can arrange to take some of the shorter dates."

"For the sake of a thousand francs which you will have in four months," exclaimed the umbrella-merchant, "do not drive me to those extortioners who take more than they give. Take them all of me, sir! I have so little occasion to resort to discount, that I have no credit; a thing which is ruinous to us little retail dealers."

"Well, I will take them," said César. "Célestin will make out the account. Be ready at eleven o'clock, then. Here is my architect, Monsieur Grindot," added the perfumer, as he saw the young man approaching with whom he had made an appointment the night before at Monsieur de la Billardière's. "Contrary to the usual custom of men of talent, sir," said César, calling upon his best manners, "you are prompt. If punctuality, according to a certain king who was famous for his wit as well as his political wisdom, is the courtesy of kings, it is the fortune of merchants. Time, sir, time is gold, especially for you artists. Architecture is the reunion of all the arts, as I may say. This way, if you please," he added, indicating a private door; "we will not go through the shop."

Four years previous to this, Monsieur Grindot had won the grand prize for architecture, and had now returned from Rome after a sojourn of three years at the expense of the State. In Italy the young man dreamed of art, but in Paris he thought of fortune. The Government only can give to an architect the millions necessary to build up his glory; in returning from Rome, it is so natural to fancy

one's self a Fontaine or a Percier, that every ambitious architect inclines toward a Government position, and seeks the patronage of influential people. When the winner of the grand prize does this, however, his friends are a little apt to call him a schemer.

The young architect had his choice of two parts; either to serve the perfumer, or be served by him. But Birotteau the deputy-mayor, Birotteau the future possessor of half the lands around the Madeleine, on which he would sooner or later be putting up fine buildings, was a being to be cultivated and treated gently. Grindot therefore laid present gain on the altar of future profit, and listened patiently to the plans and ideas of the low-born perfumer whom he secretly despised, following him about and nodding in appreciation of his words. When everything had been explained, the young architect summed up the result.

"You have," he said, "in your own house, three windows facing upon the street, besides the window on the staircase by the landing. You add to these four windows the two which are on the same level in the next house, by turning the staircase around so as to bring all your rooms upon the same floor, upon the side nearest the street."

"You have understood me perfectly," said the perfumer in astonishment.

"To carry out your plan," the architect continued, "we will have to light the staircase from above, and put in a porter's lodge under the plinth."

"The plinth—" echoed César, puzzled.

"Yes," replied the other; "the part upon which will rest—"

"Yes, I understand, sir," said César, hastily.

"As for your own apartments, let me have *carte-blanche* to arrange and decorate them. I will make them worthy—"

"Worthy!" interrupted César. "That is the word to use, sir!"

"How much time will you give me to complete this change?"

"Twenty days."

"What sum are you prepared to give the workmen?" continued Grindot.

"What sum ought all this to cost?" asked César.

"An architect can figure upon a new building almost to a centime," replied the young man; "but I must warn you beforehand that it is impossible for me to give you an exact estimate of these repairs at present. I may not be able to tell you the amount, except approximately, even by the end of a week. I beg of you to trust me; you will have a charming staircase, lighted from above, ornamented with a pretty vestibule on the street, and under the plinth—"

"Plinth, again!" ejaculated the perfumer.

"Don't be alarmed," returned the architect; "I will find there a place for a little porter's lodge. Your apartments shall be a perfect study, a work of art. Yes, sir, I aim at art rather than fortune."

"With such ideas, young man, you will succeed," said Birotteau in a patronizing tone.

"In my opinion," continued Grindot, "it is always better to make your bargains directly with your masons, painters and other workmen. I will take charge of the men after they are engaged. Give me a fee of two thousand francs, and I assure you it will be money well invested. Let me have possession of the premises to-morrow at noon, and tell me whom you have engaged for workmen."

"What do you suppose will be the whole expense, making a rough guess?" asked Birotteau.

"From ten to twelve thousand francs," replied Grindot. "But that does not include furniture, for I suppose you intend to refurnish. You had better give me the address of your upholsterer, for I would like to consult with him, in order to have all the colors harmonize."

"Monsieur Braschon, in the Rue Saint Antoine, receives my orders," said the perfumer, with the air of a duke.

The architect wrote down the address.

"Well," said Birotteau, "I will leave it all to you, sir. Only, you will have to wait until I have arranged to lease the rooms in the next house, and obtained permission to cut through the wall."

"Let me know by mail this evening," answered the architect. "I shall have to work all night at the plans. But I must take the measures, the heights and dimensions, the size of the windows—"

"It must all be done upon the day agreed," interrupted Birotteau, "or else our bargain is canceled."

"That will be all right," said the architect. "The men will work all night, and they will employ patent processes for drying the paints; but take care that the contractors do not impose upon you; make them tell their prices and make their agreements beforehand."

"Paris is the only place in the world where this sort of thing can be done with such magical rapidity," said Birotteau, with an Eastern gesture worthy of the "Thousand and One Nights." "Sir, you will do me the honor to attend my ball. Men of talent do not universally scorn men of commerce, and you will probably meet here the great *savant*, Monsieur Vauquelin of the Institute; besides Monsieur de la Billardière, Monsieur the Count de Fontaine, Monsieur Lebas, a judge and president of the tribunal of commerce; several magistrates; Monsieur the Count de Granville of the royal court, and Monsieur Popinot of the tribunal, Monsieur Camusot of the tribunal of commerce, and Monsieur Cardot, his father-in-law; and, possibly, Monsieur the Duke de Lenoncourt, first gentleman of the king's bed-chamber. I am planning this little reunion of my friends as a celebration both of the liberation of the country and of my promotion to the order of the Legion of Honor." (Here Grindot made a slight gesture.) "Possibly," continued Birotteau, "I rendered myself worthy of this notable and royal favor by sitting at the consular tribunal and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint Roch on the 13th Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. These titles—"

At this moment Constance, dressed in morning costume, emerged from Césarine's room; and her first glance arrested the speech of her husband, who was seeking to formulate a phrase worthy of expressing with becoming modesty his grandeur.

"Ah! my dear," he said as he saw her, "here is Monsieur de Grindot, a distinguished young man, and one possessed of great talent. This gentleman is the architect whom Monsieur de la Billardière recommended to us, to have the charge of our little alterations here."

The perfumer, as he spoke, got behind his wife, and, catching the architect's eye, laid his finger on his lip as he said the word "little," and the latter understood him immediately.

"Constance," continued Birotteau, "Monsieur Grindot wants to take the measurement of some of the dimensions; just let him do what he likes, my dear;" and Birotteau escaped from the room and left the house.

"Is this going to cost very much?" inquired Constance.

"No, madame," he replied. "About six thousand francs, at a rough estimate—"

"At a rough estimate!" exclaimed Madame Birotteau. "Oh, sir, I beg of you, do not begin anything without making a fixed bargain. I know the ways of these contractors; six thousand means twenty thousand. We are not in a position to do anything recklessly. I beseech you, sir, although my husband is undoubtedly master in his own house, to allow him a little time for consideration."

"Madame," replied the architect, "your husband has told me to have the alterations finished in twenty days, and if we delay, you would have the expense without the desired result."

"There are expenses and expenses," returned the perfumer's beautiful wife.

"Madame," said Grindot, "do you suppose that an architect who seeks to make a reputation by raising beautiful monuments of his skill can hope to win much glory by merely decorating a few rooms? I only undertook this as a favor to Monsieur de la Billardière, and since you do not appear to desire me to continue—" and he made a motion as if he would leave the house.

"Very well, very well, sir," said Constance, hastily retreating to the next room, where she threw herself upon her daughter's neck.

"Oh, my love," she said, "your father will ruin himself. He has employed an architect who wears a mustache and who talks about building monuments. He will probably pull this house down and build us a Louvre, before he has finished. César never stops, when once he gets a foolish plan into his head; he only told me about this project last night, and here he is, this morning, carrying it into execution."

"Pshaw! mamma; let papa alone. The Lord has always protected him," said Césarine, kissing her mother, and seating herself at the piano, with the intention of showing the young architect that the daughter of a perfumer was not wholly ignorant of the fine arts.

VI.

When the architect entered the adjoining room, he was surprised and startled at Césarine's beauty. Dressed in morning *negligée*, fresh and fair as only a young girl of eighteen can be, blonde, slender, and blue eyed, she was a perfect picture of health and elasticity. Although living in the lymphatic atmosphere of a Parisian shop, where sun and fresh air are infrequent visitors, her habits gave her plenty of the out-door exercise so necessary to health. She had a quantity of hair, growing like her father's, and drawn up at the back sufficiently to show a well-set neck. Her loveliness was not that of a lady, nor of a French duchess, but rather resembled the plump and ruddy beauty of Rubens' Flemish girls. She had a retroussé nose, like her father, but refined and spiritualized. Her skin showed a young girl's thorough vitality. She had her mother's beautiful forehead, but hers was unshadowed with care. Her soft blue eyes expressed the tender gentleness of a happy young girl. In spite of the delicacy of her form and features, she was strongly built, and her sole defects were her feet and hands, which betrayed her peasant origin. Sooner or later, she was destined to *embonpoint*. She had caught by observation a certain manner of speaking, and of holding her head, peculiar to high-bred ladies, and played off her little airs upon the clerks, who all lost their hearts to her. Popinot swore never to marry any one save her, feeling that her innocent helplessness, where the tears were always near the surface, appealed irresistibly to his sense of masculine superiority. She inspired love before a man had time to ask himself if her mind were equal to her physical charms; but after all, what does mind signify in a class of people among whom the principal element of happiness is good sense and virtue?

Césarine had had rather an elaborate education, considering her station in life; she was very fond of music, could draw a little, and read the works of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Fénelon and Racine. She very rarely took her mother's place at the counter, for her father and mother, like all lowly-born people who apparently seek to cultivate the ingratitude of their children by placing them above themselves, took delight in making a goddess of Césarine, who, however, had good sense enough not to take advantage of their weakness.

Madame Birotteau followed the architect with an uneasy air, looking at him with alarm, and pointing out to her daughter the odd movements of the meter, that wand of architects and contractors, with which Grindot was taking his measurements. She looked upon his proceedings with distrust, as she would upon those of a conjuror, but she dared not question the young man as to the results of his sorcery.

"Don't be uneasy, madame," he said, with a smile, noticing her anxious gaze; "I am not going to carry off anything."

Césarine could not help smiling also, at these words.

"Sir," said Constance, without even noticing the architect's remark, "only

be as economical as possible, I beg of you, and later we will be able to repay you."

. . . . . .

Before going to Monsieur Molineux, the proprietor of the next house, César desired to obtain from Roguin the deed under private signature which Alexander Crottat was to have prepared. As he went away from Roguin's house he saw Du Tillet at the window of Roguin's private study, and he appeared to be in animated discussion with some one.

"Is it about my business, I wonder?" thought César, with a momentary gleam of suspicion. "Suppose Constance were right, after all? But what nonsense to listen to a woman's ideas! Besides, I can speak to my uncle about it this morning. From the Cour Batave, where this Monsieur Molineux lives, to the Rue des Bourdonnais, it is only a step."

A suspicious observer, one accustomed to meeting and dealing with rogues, would not have fallen into the trap; but Birotteau's nature, and incapacity for tracing effects back to their causes, proved his ruin.

He found the umbrella merchant ready to go, and was on the point of starting with him, when Virginie, his cook, touched him on the arm.

"Monsieur," she said, "Madame does not want you to go any farther—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Birotteau, impatiently, "here is another of her notions!"

—"Until you have taken the cup of coffee which is waiting for you," added the woman.

"Ah! that's true," said César, in an altered tone. Then turning to Cayron, he added,

"I have so many things in my head just now that I am very apt to forget to put anything into my stomach. If you will have the kindness to go on ahead, we will meet at Monsieur Molineux's door—unless, indeed, you will go in and explain the matter to him, which would save time."

Monsieur Molineux belonged to a grotesque species of real estate man, which exists only in Paris, just as a certain lichen grows only in Iceland. This comparison is furthermore appropriate, inasmuch as this sort of man has a mixed nature, and belongs to a sort of animal-vegetable kingdom which a second Mercier would classify as composed of cryptogamia which grow, flourish or wither on, in, or under the plaster walls of various strange and unhealthy houses where these beings prefer to congregate.

At first sight, this human plant, umbelliferous, crowned with a tubulous little blue cap, with stem sheathed in greenish pantaloons, and bulbous roots enveloped in felt slippers, presents a whitened and commonplace physiognomy which certainly betrays no hint of venom. In this odd production appears on the surface only an ordinary stock-broker, thinking merely of the latest news, and believing implicitly in the maxim, "Read the newspapers!" He is a citizen who is essentially the friend of order, but always in moral revolt to the power which he nevertheless obeys; a creature weak in mass, but ferocious in detail; unfeeling as a sheriff, when there is a question of his own rights, yet giving chickweed to his birds, and stopping in the midst of a mortgage deed to play with his canary; suspicious as a jailer, and always trying to overreach himself by gross avarice. The malevolence of this hybrid flower reveals itself only by use; to be experienced, its loathsome bitterness must come in contact with something wherein its interests will clash with those of some other being. Like all Parisians, Molineux felt that desire for authority and sovereignty experienced by every one, even by the porter who exercises it upon every victim—woman, child, or dog—that comes in his way, upon whom he can visit the mortifications heaped upon him from a higher sphere.

This little old man had neither wife nor child; he used his charwoman harshly, but she took good care to keep out of his way, so she scarcely served as a scapegoat. Thus his appetite for tyranny remained unappeased, and to satisfy it he made himself thoroughly acquainted with all the laws relating to the construction and hiring of houses, and henceforth a

tenant became his enemy, his inferior, his subject, his slave; he claimed respect from every one, and looked upon any man who passed him upon the staircase without saluting him as a most unmannerly being. He wrote his own receipts, and sent them at noon on the day they were due. Any tenant in arrears received a notice to leave at a certain hour; and then the seizure, and costs, and all the judicial machinery were set in motion without loss of time: Molineux never granted delay; his heart was obdurate with respect to his tenants. He kept his houses in repair just so much as was necessary to preserve them; his tenants were at liberty to improve upon the premises as much as they pleased, but woe to the unwary one who did it to any great extent. Molineux never rested until he had by some means turned him out, and newly rented the premises to some one who would be attracted to pay a high rent on account of the new decorations. He understood all the shiftings and windings of Parisian legislation, and employed them for his own interests. He wrote letters to his tenants which were extremely suave and polite; but beneath his style of writing, as beneath his prepossessing appearance, was concealed the soul of a Shylock. He always exacted six months' rent in advance, and made sure that the amount of furniture was enough to discharge the claims of rent, if necessary.

Apart from his ideas upon this subject, however, Jean Baptiste Molineux seemed to ordinary observers kind and accommodating, and in all respects a harmless and ordinary citizen.

The Cour Batave, where the little old man dwelt, was the result of one of those extraordinary speculations, which even their originators cannot explain, after they are once executed. The cloistered building, with arcades and inner galleries, built of hewn stone, ornamented with a fountain at the back, a fountain differing from ordinary ones, in that instead of giving out water it stood for the most part with gaping mouth, as if beseeching a drink, was without doubt intended for the purpose of endowing the Saint-Denis neighborhood with a kind of Palais Royal. The place, unhealthy and buried between the four walls of the neighboring houses, had a little life and movement during the day; it was the center of the obscure passages which met there, and joined the neighborhood of the markets with the neighborhood Saint-Martin by the famous Rue Quincampoix; little damp paths whose frequenters were certain to catch the rheumatism. But during the night, no place in Paris was more deserted; it might be deemed the catacombs of commerce.

The rooms of this merchant palace had no other outlook than that upon the common court, upon which all the windows fronted; consequently rents were exceedingly low.

Monsieur Molineux lived upon one of the corners, upon the sixth floor, from sanitary motives; the air being pure only at seventy feet from the ground. There, the good man enjoyed the enchanting prospect of the windmills on Montmartre, as he walked upon the leads where he cultivated his flowers, notwithstanding the police ordinance respecting the hanging gardens of modern Babylon. He had four rooms, which betrayed by their scanty furnishing the avarice of the man; in the anteroom, six straw-seated chairs, a small stove, and four engravings purchased at auction and hung against the bottle-green walls; in the dining-room two cupboards, two cages full of birds, an oil-cloth covered table, a barometer, a door giving upon the hanging gardens, and a few mahogany chairs with leathern seats; in the parlor, little curtains of old green silk and chairs with white painted wooden frames, upholstered in green Utrecht velvet. As for the bedroom of the old bachelor, it held furniture of the time of Louis XV., very much the worse for wear, and not overclean. The mantel-piece was ornamented with a clock consisting of two pillars, between which was a dial which served as a pedestal for a figure of Pallas brandishing a spear. The floor was encumbered with dishes, full of remnants destined for the cats, among which it was difficult for the feet

to find a safe path. Above a rosewood chest of drawers hung a pastel portrait, supposed to represent Molineux in his youth. There were one or two tables, and a bracket on which were a number of Molineux's defunct canary birds, stuffed. And lastly, there was a bed, whose austerity would have suited a very anchorite.

César Birotteau was delighted with the exquisite politeness of Molineux, whom he found wrapped in a gray cloth dressing-gown, watching some milk which was heating over a little sheet-iron chafing-dish in a corner of the fire-place, and some water which was boiling in a little brown earthen cup, and which he poured in little doses into his coffee-pot. In order not to disturb his landlord, the umbrella merchant had himself opened the door to Birotteau.

Molineux held in great veneration the mayors and deputies of the city of Paris, whom he called "his municipal officers;" and when César appeared, he rose, and remained standing, with his little cap in his hand, until the great man was seated.

"No, sir; yes, sir; ah! sir," he ejaculated; "if I had known that I was to have the honor of receiving into the bosom of my modest Penates a member of the municipal body of Paris, I assure you that I should have felt it my duty to present myself at your house, although your landlord—to be exact, so to become—" here Birotteau made a gesture begging him to put on the little cap again. "I shall not do it," he continued. "I shall not put on my cap until you are seated, and with your hat on, if you have a cold; for my room is not very warm, the scantiness of my income not permitting me— As you wish it, sir."

Birotteau had sneezed while searching for his deeds. He now produced them, saying, to avoid delay, that Monsieur Roguin, notary, had drawn them up at his expense.

"I do not deny the capability of Monsieur Roguin, a well-known member of the legal profession," replied Molineux; "but I have my own little habits, and am accustomed to doing my business in my own way; and my notary is—"

"But this is such a simple matter," said the perfumer, accustomed to the prompt dealings of business men.

"Simple!" cried Molineux. "Nothing is simple that relates to the letting of houses. Ah! you are not a landlord, monsieur; and you are all the happier for that. If you knew how ungrateful some tenants can be, and to how many precautions we are obliged to resort. Why, sir, I have a tenant—"

And Monsieur Molineux employed a quarter of an hour in relating how Monsieur Gendrin, a draughtsman, had been guilty of actions worthy of a Marat, and had enticed such bad company into his apartments, that the staircases were not fit for decent people to be seen upon. And why had he done all this? Simply because he had been asked to pay his rent on the 15th. Gendrin and Molineux were going to law about it, for, although he declined to pay, the artist had the audacity to continue to occupy the rooms. Molineux had received several anonymous letters, no doubt from Gendrin, in which he had been threatened with assassination some evening in the détours which lead to the Cour Batave.

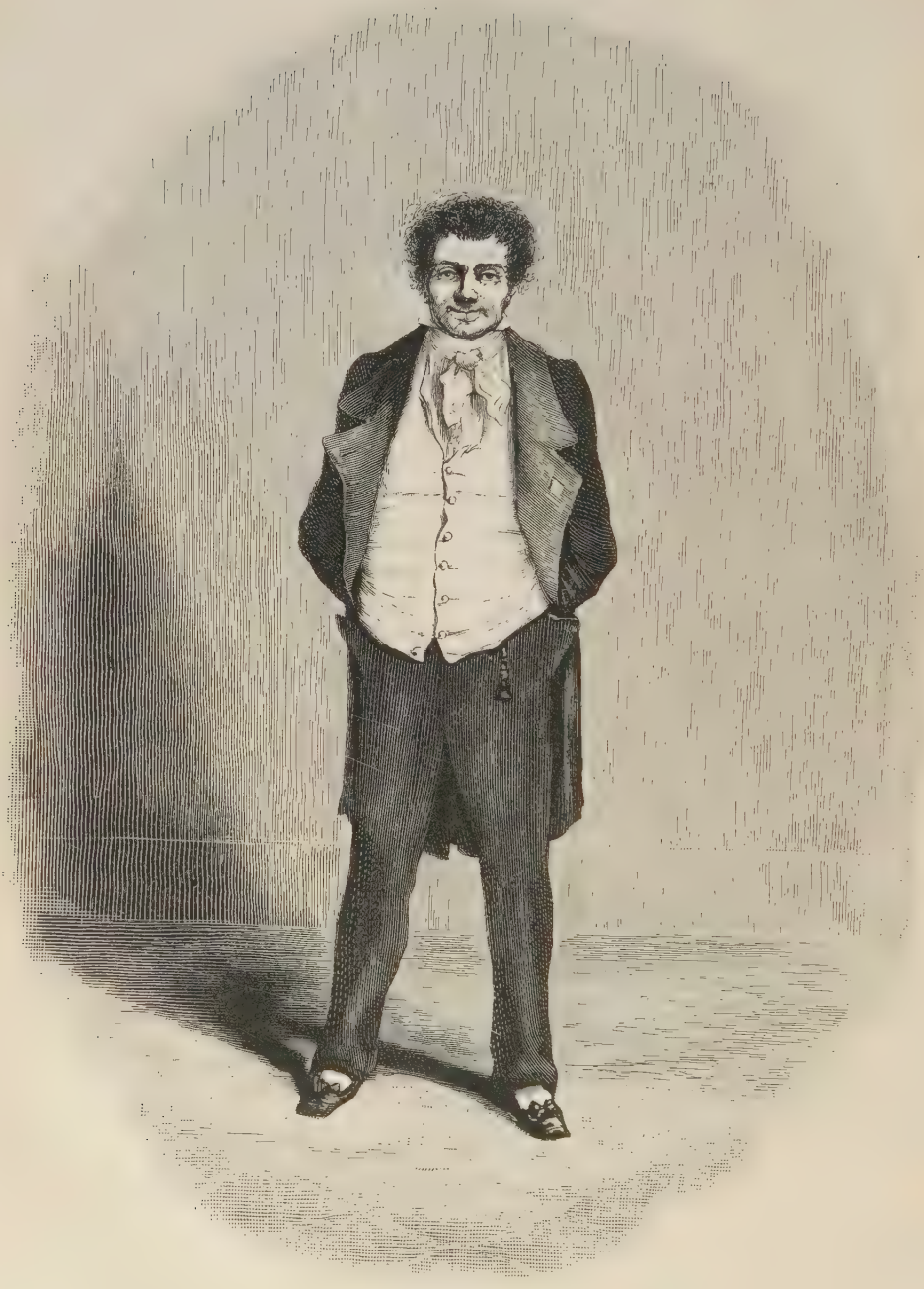
"To such a degree, sir," he continued, "that the prefect of police, to whom I told my trouble (taking occasion at the same time to touch upon some modifications which might be made to advantage in the laws which bear upon the case) has authorized me to carry pistols for my personal safety."

And the little old man rose to look for his pistols, and exhibited them as proof of his story.

"But, sir, you have nothing of the sort to fear from me," said Birotteau, looking at Cayron with a smile in which was expressed his pity for such a man.

Molineux caught the look, and was deeply wounded to see such an expression on the face of a municipal officer, whose duty it was to protect those under his administration. He could have forgiven everything else, but he could not pardon Birotteau for this smile.

"Monsieur," he said, dryly, "an esteemed consular judge, a deputy, and



CÆSAR BIROTTEAU.

"In talking, he always crossed his hands behind his back."

an honorable merchant cannot descend to these trivialities—for they *are* trivialities. But, to return to the matter in hand, there is to be an opening in the partition-wall to which the consent of your landlord, the Count de Granville, will have to be obtained; then there are agreements to be made as to the re-establishment of this wall at the end of your lease; and lastly, the rent is very low, and will be sure to rise, for the Place Vendôme will gain in value, it will gain! The Rue Castiglione will be built up! I am bound—I am bound—"

"Come," said Birotteau, astonished; "what do you want? I know enough of business to conclude that your reasons will give way before a superior reason, money. Well! how much do you want?"

"Only what is right, monsieur," replied Molineux. "How much longer has your lease to run?"

"Seven years," answered Birotteau.

"In seven years, what will not my first floor be worth!" exclaimed Molineux. "Who would not be glad to rent two furnished rooms in that neighborhood? For more than two hundred francs a month, perhaps! I bind myself, I cramp myself by a lease. We will put the rent, then, at fifteen hundred francs. For that price I consent to have the two rooms altered which Monsieur Cayron, here, is renting at present, and I give you a lease of them for seven consecutive years. The cutting through of the partition-wall will be at your own expense, and I agree to it on condition that you bring me the consent and assurance of non-interference of the Count de Granville. You will assume the responsibility of making this little opening, and as far as I am concerned you need not replace the wall, but you may instead give me an indemnity of five hundred francs, immediately; no one knows whether we will be living or dead at the end of seven years, and I don't want to have to run after any one to get my wall repaired."

"Those conditions seem to me fair enough," said Birotteau.

"Then," continued Molineux, "you will pay down to me seven hundred and fifty francs at once, chargeable to the last six months of possession, for which the lease will give you a receipt. Oh! and I will accept little deeds of furniture, called *value in rents*, in order not to lose my security, at any date you please. I am short and square in business matters. We will also stipulate that you will close the door upon my staircase, to which you will have no right of entrance—at your own expense—with masonry. You notice that I do not ask any indemnity for restoring it at the end of the lease; I consider that included in the five hundred francs. You will always find me just, monsieur."

"We merchants are not so punctilious," said the perfumer. "It would be impossible to do any business, with such formalities."

"Oh, in business it is a very different thing, particularly in the perfumery business, where everything always goes smoothly," said the old man, with an unpleasant smile. "But, sir, in the matter of rents, in Paris, nothing is unimportant. Now, I had a tenant in the Rue Montorgueil—"

"Sir," said Birotteau, "I should be exceedingly sorry to interrupt your breakfast; here are the deeds, and you may make your alterations; I agree to all your demands. We will sign them to-morrow, but we will make the agreement to-day, for to-morrow my architect must be master of the premises."

"Sir," said Molineux, looking toward the umbrella merchant, "there is the rent which has already expired, which Monsieur Cayron will not pay; we will add it to the little furniture deeds, in order to make the lease run from January to January, which will be better."

"Very well," said Birotteau.

"The porter's fees"—began Molineux.

"But," interrupted Birotteau, "you deprive me of the use of the staircase, and of the entrance, and it is not just—"

"Oh, you are a tenant," said the little old man, who was now riding his hobby; "you owe the door and window tax, and your part of the expenses. When everything is once fully understood, sir, there

is never any difficulty. You are getting very rich, are you not? Your business is doing well?"

"Oh, yes," answered Birotteau; "but I have another motive for this. I am thinking of having a little gathering of some friends, to celebrate the deliverance of the country, and also to honor my promotion to the order of the Legion of Honor."

"Ah!" said Molineux, "a well-merited reward."

"Yes," replied Birotteau. "It is possible that I am thought worthy of this royal favor because I have sat at the consular tribunal, and have also fought for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint Roch, on the 13th Vendemiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon; these claims—"

"Are as good as those of our brave soldiers of the old army," interrupted the little old man. "The ribbon is red, because it has been dipped in loyal blood."

At these words, taken bodily from the "Constitutionnel," Birotteau could not restrain himself from inviting Molineux, who overwhelmed him with gratitude, and was almost ready to forgive him for his disdain. The old man accompanied his new tenant as far as the landing, fairly overflowing with polite attentions. When Birotteau had reached the center of the Cour Batave with Cayron, he looked at him with a jocose twinkle in his eye.

"I would not have believed in the existence of such weak-minded people," said he, catching himself just in time to avoid the word "stupid," and substituting the milder one in its place.

"Ah! sir," said Cayron, "everybody has not your talents."

Birotteau had felt himself to be a superior man in the presence of Molineux, and Cayron's remark did not tend to decrease his self-satisfaction. He smiled amicably, and gave his parting bow in truly royal fashion.

"Here I am at the market," he said to himself then, "and I may just as well go in and see about those nuts."

VII.

After an hour's search, Birotteau, sent by the market-woman to the Rue des Lombards, where nuts were used in great quantities in the manufacture of sweetmeats, learned from his friends the Matifats that the dried nuts were in bulk, kept only by a certain Madame Angélique Madou, in the Rue Perrin Gasselin; and that it was the only place in the city where the genuine Provence filbert and the white hazel-nut of the Alps could be found.

The Rue Perrin Gasselin is one of the bypaths of the labyrinth inclosed in the square formed by the quai, the Rue Saint Denis, the Rue de la Ferronnerie and the Rue de la Monnaie. In this place swarm a countless number of dealers in all sorts of merchandise—herring and muslin, silk and honey, butter and laces. Old stables are filled with tons of oil, and coach-houses contain myriads of cotton stockings. It is the place to find in gross the merchandise which is sold at retail in the markets.

Madame Madou had inherited her business from her husband, now long since dead. She had been beautiful, and traces of her charms were still visible, although nearly concealed by the enormous amount of flesh which she had acquired of late years. She lived on the ground-floor of an old, yellow house, now nearly in ruins, and only held together by immense iron bars. The deceased merchant had succeeded in ridding himself of all rivals, and securing the monopoly of the trade; and in spite of some slight defects in her education, his widow succeeded in carrying on the business herself, taking charge of her warehouses, which occupied coach-houses, stables, and old workshops, where she waged war successfully with encroaching insects and vermin. Without either counter, strong-box or books—for she did not know how to read or write—she was in the habit of replying by blows to a letter, deeming it an insult. She never had any difficulty with the cultivators who sent their crops to her, for they corresponded with ready money, the sole

method of communication which she understood; and she always visited them once a year.

Birotteau found her in the midst of her sacks of hazel-nuts, chestnuts, and walnuts.

"Good-morning, my dear," he said, with the air of a gay young fellow.

"'Your dear,' indeed!" she echoed. "How long since, my son?"

"I am a perfumer," he replied with dignity; "and what is more, I am deputy-mayor; and therefore, both as magistrate and customer, I have a right to beg that you will be more respectful to me."

"I will do as I please about that," returned the virago. "I don't care anything about the mayor; he and I never bother each other. As for my customers, if I don't please them, they can go somewhere else."

"This is the result of monopoly," thought Birotteau.

"Well," she continued, sharply, "if you are a customer, what do you want? I never saw you here before."

Birotteau stated his errand, and also his name.

"Ah!" she said; "you are the famous Birotteau who married a beautiful wife. Well, how many of these hazel-nuts do you want?"

"Six thousand, good measure," he replied.

"That takes all that I have," she said, in a tone that resembled a hoarse flute.

"My dear sir," she continued, "I plainly see that you are destined to be a customer of whom I can be proud, and your name will be engraved upon the heart of the woman whom I love best in all the world."

"And who is that?" he asked.

"Dear Madame Madou," she replied, with a grin.

"How much are your nuts?" he inquired.

"To you," she answered, "twenty-five francs a hundred, if you take them all."

"Twenty-five francs!" exclaimed Birotteau. "That is fifteen hundred francs in all! And I may possibly want hundreds of thousands a year."

"But just see how fine they are," she said, plunging her red arm into a sack of filberts. "And no bad ones, either. Just consider how the grocers cheat in weight, and how many spoiled ones they give! Do you think that I am going to sell my goods for less than they are worth, just to please you? You are a pretty fellow, but you don't take my fancy enough for that! If you insist upon it, we will call it a bargain at twenty francs; I wouldn't like to send away a deputy, for fear of offending the mayor! Just feel how fine they are, and heavy. You won't find a worm among them."

"Come," he said, "send me six thousand, for two thousand francs at eighty days, to the Rue Faubourg-du-Temple, to my shop, early to-morrow morning."

"What a hurry you are in!" she remarked. "Well, good-day to you; but if it is all the same to you," she added, following him into the court, "I would rather have your note for forty days; for I have given you too good a bargain as it is, and I can't afford to lose the discount."

"Well," he said, "we will make it fifty days. But we will weigh every hundred pounds, in order to be sure there are no bad ones; or else it is not a bargain."

"Ah! he is a sharp dog," said Madame Madou. "He is not to be cheated! It is those beggars in the Rue des Lombards who have put him up to this. Those great wolves do all they can to devour us poor lambs."

This particular lamb measured five feet in height, and three feet in circumference, and bore a strong resemblance to a milestone, dressed in striped calico, and destitute of a waist.

The perfumer, lost in his calculations, meditated, as he went along the Rue St. Honore, upon his approaching duel with the "Huile de Macassar;" he thought of all the details, made up his mind as to the form of the bottles, the texture of the corks, and the color of the handbills. And yet it is declared that there is no poetry in commerce! Why, Newton himself did not calculate more diligently concerning his celebrated binomial than

did Birotteau for the Extract Comagène; for in his mind extract and oil were synonymous and indiscriminate terms. All these calculations hurried through his head, and he looked upon this activity in his empty skull as the action of true talent. So preoccupied was he, that he passed the Rue des Bourdonnais, and had to retrace his steps when the thought of his uncle at last recurred to his mind.

Claude Joseph Pillerault, formerly a hardware merchant at the sign of the Golden Clock, was a man of fine appearance, with a face which plainly showed his innate goodness. Everything about him harmonized—costume and manners, mind and heart, language and thought, word and deed. The sole remaining relative of Madame Birotteau, Pillerault had centered all his affections upon her and her daughter, after having lost both wife and son, as well as an adopted son, the child of one of his servants. These cruel bereavements had left the good man in a state of what may be called Christian stoicism, a doctrine which animated his life and colored his last days with a tint at once warm and cold, like that which gilds a winter sunset. His lean head, where the ochre and the bistre were harmoniously blended, strikingly resembled that which artists are accustomed to bestow upon Father Time. Of a medium height, he was thick-set rather than fat, for Nature had designed him for work and a long life, and his breadth of back and shoulders showed a strongly-built frame. His eyes, the color of a green plum, dotted with black specks, were remarkable for their uniform clearness. His forehead, furrowed by straight lines and yellowed with age, was small and narrow, and covered with silver-gray hair, worn short. His clear-cut mouth indicated prudence, rather than avarice, and his whole appearance gave evidence of the sober, hard-working life which he had led for sixty years.

His history somewhat resembled that of César, but without the lucky strokes of fortune. A clerk until he was thirty years old, his money was invested in business when César's was put into stocks; and at the time of the Revolution, his pick-axes and his ironware had all been put in requisition. His wisdom, forethought, and habit of exactness had been of great service to him in his business, and he had rarely got into difficulties. He was a keen observer, and often refused what to his more eager neighbors looked like a rare opportunity, which they grasped for themselves and repented of at leisure, saying with a wise shake of the head that Pillerault was a knowing fellow and knew how to scent out rogues. He preferred small but sure profits to those bold ventures which put large sums in jeopardy. He kept in his stock chimneybacks, gridirons, great andirons, kettles of bronze and cast-iron, and the hoes and other working implements of the peasant. This part of the business called for excessive mechanical labor, and neither were the profits in proportion to the work; for there is very little money to be made on these heavy articles, so awkward to move or to store away. He had worked hard with his own hands, and no fortune was ever more legitimately or honorably earned than his. In later days, he was usually to be seen smoking his pipe before his door, looking at the passers-by, and keeping an eye upon his clerks.

In 1814, when he gave up business, his fortune consisted of seventy thousand francs, from which he derived an income of five thousand or more francs; and of forty thousand francs payable in five years, without interest, the proceeds of his business, which he had sold to one of his clerks.

His sober manner of living, now become a habit, could not lend itself to the pleasures of an idle life, when he gave up his business, and he accordingly interested himself greatly in the political movements of the time. His convictions were those of the extreme Left, and he held tenaciously to his belief in his right to the liberty and other fruits of the Revolution; but he was not narrow in his political opinions, he never spoke injuriously of his adversaries, he had a holy horror of wickedness, and believed in Republican virtues. In his imagination, Manuel was

guiltless of all excess, General Foy was a great man, Casimir Périer without ambition, Lafayette a political prophet, and Courier a good man.

The good old man thoroughly enjoyed the pleasures of family life, and was in the habit of paying frequent visits to the Ragons and to his niece to Judge Popinot, to Joseph Lebas, and to the Matifats. His personal expenses amounted to not more than fifteen hundred francs, and the remainder of his income he delighted to devote to good works, and to presents for his little niece and his circle of friends. He gave them a dinner every three months at Roland's, on the Rue .du Hasard, and took them to the play; and he was never happier than when he was giving pleasure to some one.

When he sold his business, he did not care to leave the old, familiar neighborhood, and therefore took three rooms on the fourth floor of an old house on the Rue des Bourdonnais. Just as Molineux's characteristics were portrayed in his strangely furnished dwelling-place, so the pure and simple life of Pillerault was revealed by the appearance of his rooms, consisting of antechamber, parlor and bedroom. In their dimensions, they resembled the cell of a Carthusian friar. The antechamber, with its red, well-scrubbed floor, had only one window, hung with curtains of percale with red borders, and a few mahogany chairs with seats of sheep leather, ornamented with gilded nails; the walls were hung with olive-green paper, and decorated with pictures of "Washington Taking the Oath," of "Napoleon as First Consul," and of the "Battle of Austerlitz."

The parlor, without doubt planned by an upholsterer, had yellow furniture, a carpet, chimney-ornaments of ungilded bronze, a little table with a vase of flowers under a glass globe, and a round table with a cover, upon which was a water-jug. The extreme newness of this room was sufficient evidence of the sacrifice which the old hardware-merchant had made to the demands of society, for he rarely had visitors.

In his bedroom, simple as that of a monk or a soldier, the first thing that caught the eye was a crucifix placed in the alcove. An old woman came to look after his housekeeping, but his respect for women was such that he would never allow her to black his boots for him.

His costume was simple and invariable. He usually wore a coat and pantaloons of blue cloth, a waistcoat of printed cotton, a white cravat, and high shoes. On holidays he put on a coat with metal buttons. His habits of rising, breakfasting, going out, dining, spending his evenings, and returning to his home, were all defined with the strictest exactitude, for regularity of habits gives long life and health.

There was never any danger of political disputes between César, the Ragons, the Abbé Loraux and Pillerault, for they were all too well acquainted to have any hope of making proselytes. Like his nephew and the Ragons, Pillerault had great confidence in Roguin; and to him the Parisian notary was a being to be venerated and looked up to as a living image of honesty.

The perfumer mounted the seventy-eight steps which led to the little brown door of his uncle's apartment, thinking as he did so that the old man must be very hale and fresh, to be able always to ascend them without a murmur. He found the coat and the pantaloons lying on the portemanteau outside the door, and Madame Vaillant brushing and rubbing them while her master, wrapped in a dressing-gown of gray cloth, was taking his breakfast, seated beside the fire, and reading the parliamentary debates in the "Constitutionnel," or the "Journal du Commerce."

"Well, uncle," said César, "the business is finished, and they are going to draw up the deeds. But if you have any fears or regrets, there is time yet to back out."

"Why should I back out?" asked the old man. "The thing is sure, but slow, as all good investments are. My fifty thousand francs are in the Bank; I received the last five thousand francs from my business, yesterday. As for the Ragons, they are putting their whole fortune into the venture."

"But how will they be able to live?" asked César.

"Oh, never fear; they will live," answered the old man, evasively.

"I understand you, uncle," said Birotteau, pressing the old man's hands, and greatly moved.

"How is the business settled?" asked Pillerault, abruptly.

"I shall be in it for three-eighths. and you and the Ragons for one-eighth; I will credit you with it on my books, until they have decided the question of the notary deeds."

"Very well," replied the other. "But, my boy, you must be very rich, to be able to put three hundred thousand francs into this thing? Are you not risking a great deal? Will not your business suffer for it? But that is your own affair! If you get into any difficulty, however, I could sell two thousand francs' worth of my investments. But, my boy, you must understand that if you take help from me, you take it from what is intended for your daughter's fortune."

"Uncle, you say the kindest things in the simplest manner," exclaimed César. "You touch my very heart."

"General Foy touched mine in a very different way just now," returned the old man. "There! that's enough! the land will not fly away, and half of it at least will be ours; if we had to wait six years, it would still be of some use to us. We could let it as a timber-yard, if for nothing else. We need not lose by it. There is only one chance, and that is an impossible one; Roguin will not run away with the money—"

"And yet that is exactly what my wife told me last night she feared," said César.

"Roguin run away with the money!" laughed Pillerault. "And why should he?"

And with an incredulous smile, the old man went for his check-book, wrote a check, and signed it.

"There!" he said; "that is good at the bank for a hundred thousand francs, for Ragon and me. They have sold to that rascal of a Du Tillet their fifteen shares in the Wortschin mines, to make up the sum. It breaks my heart to see good people in trouble; and such noble and worthy people, too: the very flower of the old *bourgeoisie!* They do not let their brother Popinot, the judge, know anything about it, for they do not want him to feel obliged to help them. People who, like me, have worked hard for thirty years!"

"Then God grant that the Huile Comagène may be successful," exclaimed Birotteau. "I should be doubly happy. Well, good-day, uncle; come and dine on Sunday with the Ragons, Roguin and Monsieur Claparon. We will sign everything the day after to-morrow. To-morrow will be Friday, and I do not want to do business—"

"Then you believe in that superstition?" interrupted the old man.

"Uncle," replied Birotteau, solemnly, "I shall never believe that the day upon which the son of God was put to death by men is a lucky day. People stop all business on the 21st of January, and—"

"I will come on Sunday," said Pillerault, abruptly.

"If it were not for his political opinions," thought César, as he descended the staircase, "my uncle would not have his equal in this world. Why does he want to have anything to do with politics? He would be much nicer if he never thought of them. His obstinacy only proves that no man is perfect."

VIII.

"THREE o'clock already!" exclaimed César Birotteau, as he entered his own door again.

"Sir, do you take these bills?" asked Célestin, showing him the umbrella merchant's notes.

"Yes, at six, without commission," replied Birotteau. Then, turning to his wife, he said:

"My dear, have the goodness to get everything ready for my toilet; I am going to see Monsieur Vauquelin: you know my errand. Don't forget to give me a white cravat."

He gave several orders to the clerks, and not seeing Popinot, guessed that his future associate was dressing, and so went promptly up to his own room, where he found the Dresden Madonna magnificently framed, according to his orders.

"Well, that is pretty!" he said to his daughter.

"Oh, papa!" she rejoined; "call it beautiful instead of pretty, unless you want people to laugh at you."

"Isn't that a nice daughter, to scold her own father?" he said, pinching her ear. "Well! for my own taste, I would as soon have Hero and Leander. The Virgin is a religious subject which might go in a chapel; but Hero and Leander! I believe I will buy it, for the flask of oil is what gave me the idea—"

"Papa, I do not understand you," said Césarine.

"Virginie, call a fiacre," cried César in resounding tones, when he had finished shaving, and little Popinot had made his appearance, dragging his lame foot along, and trying to conceal it from Césarine.

The lover had not yet perceived that, in his mistress's eyes, his infirmity no longer existed. Delicious proof of love, which those people who are afflicted with some bodily defect can alone experience!

"Sir," he said, "the press will be in working order to-morrow."

"Well, what is it, Popinot?" asked César, as the lad hesitated and blushed.

"Sir, it is, that I have had the happiness to find a shop and a back-shop, with a kitchen and chambers above, and some storage-rooms, for twelve hundred francs a year, in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants."

"We must get a lease of it for eighteen years," said Birotteau. "But come now to Monsieur Vauquelin's; we can talk as we go."

César and Popinot entered the carriage before the astonished eyes of the clerks, who could not understand the elaborate toilets and the unwonted vehicle, ignorant of the great things that were being meditated by the master of the "Reine des Roses."

"And now we shall know the truth about the nuts," said the perfumer.

"Nuts?" repeated Popinot.

"Now, you have my secret, Popinot," said the perfumer; "I have let slip the word 'nuts,' and that is all there is to it. The oil of nuts is the only one which has any effect upon the hair, and thus far no perfumery house has thought of it. When I saw the picture of Hero and Leander, I said to myself: 'If the ancients used so much oil for their hair, they must have had some reason for it.' From there I went a little farther, and got my idea of the oil of nuts, thanks to young Bianchon, the medical student, your relative; he told me that at the school, his fellow-pupils all used the oil of hazel-nuts to promote the growth of their mustaches and whiskers. Now, all that we need is Monsieur Vauquelin's sanction. With a little instruction from him, we will have an article which will not impose upon the public. Just now I went to the market for the nuts, the raw material; in a few moments I shall be with one of the wisest men in France, learning how to produce the finished article. The proverb is correct, which says that extremes meet. Look you, my boy! Commerce is the medium between vegetable productions and science. Angélique Madou gathers, Monsieur Vauquelin extracts, and we sell the essence. The nuts in themselves are worth about five sous per pound; Monsieur Vauquelin is going to increase their value a hundred-fold, and we ourselves are, if I may use the expression, about to render a service to humanity; for if vanity causes tortures, the relief of those tortures by the introduction of a good cosmetic must be a benefit to mankind."

"Now be respectful, Anselme," he continued as they entered the street where Vauquelin lived; "we are about to penetrate into the sanctuary of science. You may put the Virgin on a chair in the dining-room. I hope that I shall be able to tell him clearly what I want," he added naïvely. "Popinot, this man is my benefactor, and therefore in a certain way he is yours also."

These words made Popinot turn cold, and step if as he were walking on eggs, looking uneasily at the walls as he did

so. Monsieur Vauquelin was in his study when Monsieur Birotteau was announced; and remembering him to be a deputy of the mayor, and high in favor, he received him immediately.

"So you do not forget me, in spite of your grandeur?" said the learned man; "but from chemist to perfumer there is only a step."

"Alas, sir!" returned Birotteau; "from your genius to the simplicity of a man like me there is an immense gulf. I owe to you all that you are pleased to call my grandeur, and I shall never forget it, either in this world or the next."

"Oh, as for the next world," said Vauquelin, "they say that there we shall all be equal, kings and scholars alike."

"Provided the kings and scholars have behaved themselves equally well in this world," corrected Birotteau.

"Is this your son?" asked Vauquelin, looking at little Popinot, who was completely stupefied at finding nothing at all extraordinary in this room where he had expected to see all sorts of monstrosities, gigantic machines, flying metals, and animated substances.

"No, sir," replied Birotteau; "this is a young man of whom I am very fond, and who has come to beg of you a favor proportioned to your talent; and is not that infinite?" he added. "We have come to consult you for the second time, after an interval of sixteen years, upon an important matter, of which I, as a perfumer, am ignorant."

"Well, let us see; what is it?" asked Vauquelin, encouragingly.

"I know," replied Birotteau, "that the study of the human hair occupies most of your time, and that you have devoted yourself to its analysis; now, while you are meditating upon it for the sake of glory, I am thinking about it from a business point of view."

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau, what is it that you require? the analysis of the hair?" and the chemist took up a little paper. "I am about to read an essay upon this subject at the Academy of Sciences," he continued. "Hair consists of a rather large proportion of mucus, of a small proportion of white oil, of a good deal of greenish-black oil, of iron, of a few atoms of oxide of manganese, of phosphate of lime, of a very small proportion of carbonate of lime, of silica, and considerable sulphur. The different proportions in which these substances are mingled make the different colors of the hair. In red hair, for instance, there is a much larger amount of greenish-black oil than in the others."

César and Popinot opened their eyes to a comical extent at these words.

"Nine things!" exclaimed Birotteau. "Is it possible that metals and oils are both to be found in a hair? I would not have believed it, if any one else had told me so! It is most wonderful! God is great, Monsieur Vauquelin."

"Hair is produced by a periodically-acting organ," continued the great chemist, "a sort of pocket open at the two ends; one of these ends is connected with nerves and vessels, and out of the other grows the hair. According to some of our learned contemporaries, and among them Monsieur de Blainville, the hair is dead matter, expelled from this pocket or crypt, which becomes immediately refilled with a pulpy matter."

"He knows a thing or two, does he not?" said César to Popinot, admiringly. "But, monsieur," he continued, in a tone of alarm; "if the hair is born dead, it is impossible to make it live, and we are lost! the prospectus would sound absurd; you do not know how peculiar the public are about some things; it would never do to tell them that they were carrying a cemetery about on their heads! And then all those nuts which I have bought!" he added, dolefully, with a thought of the money loss.

"Don't be alarmed," said Vauquelin, smiling. "I see that you are thinking of some secret for preventing the hair from coming out or turning white. Now this is my opinion on the subject, after a great deal of research."

At these words Popinot pricked up his ears like a startled rabbit.

"The discoloration of this dead or living substance, whichever you are pleased

to call it," continued the chemist, "is, according to my idea, produced by the interruption of the secretion of the coloring matters, which explains why, in cold climates, the hair of animals that have fine fur pales and bleaches during the winter."

"Eh! Popinot?" said Birotteau in a knowing undertone, kicking the clerk softly under the table.

"It is evident," resumed Vauquelin, "that the alteration in the hair is due to sudden changes in the ambient temperature—"

"Ambient, Popinot! remember that!" cried César, in a high state of excitement.

"Yes," said Vauquelin; "to alternate heat and cold, or else to interior phenomena which produce the same effect. Thus in all probability headaches and affections of the brain absorb, dissipate, or displace the generating fluids. Let the doctors take care of the inside of the head; but as for the outside, bring on your cosmetics."

"Well, sir!" said Birotteau, drawing a long breath, "you give me new life. I had thought of selling the oil of hazel-nuts, knowing that the ancients made use of oil for their hair. And why do athletes anoint themselves—"

"Olive-oil is as good as hazel-nut oil," said Vauquelin, without paying any attention to Birotteau's last remark. "Any oil is good for preserving the bulbous root from influences injurious to the substances which it contains in dissolution, as we should say in chemistry. Possibly you are right; I have heard that the oil of the hazel-nut contains a stimulant. I shall try to find out the differences which exist between the oils of the beechnut, the rape-seed, the olive, the hazel-nut, etc."

"I am not then mistaken," said Birotteau, triumphantly. "I have met with a great man. Macassar is doomed! Macassar, you must know, is a cosmetic given—or rather sold, and sold at a high price—to make the hair grow."

"My dear sir," said Vauquelin, "two ounces of the real Huile de Macassar have not entered Europe. The Huile de Macassar has not the least action upon the hair, but the Malays buy it for its weight in gold, because it preserves the hair, and they do not know that whale-oil is quite as good. No power, either chemical or divine—"

"Oh! divine!—do not say that, sir," exclaimed Birotteau, much shocked.

"But, my dear sir," said Vauquelin, "the very first law which God follows is the law of consistency: without unity there is no power—"

"Ah! if you look at it like that," said the perfumer, appeased.

"No power, then," continued Vauquelin, "can make hair grow upon a bald-headed person; but in urging the use of the oil, you will make no mistake, and be guilty of no falsehood, and I think that those who use it will find that it preserves their hair."

"Do you think," ventured Birotteau, "that the Royal Academy of Sciences would approve—"

But Vauquelin shook his head. "So many charlatans," he said, "have abused the name of the Academy, that it would not help you any to offer it. Besides, my conscience refuses to regard hazel-nut oil as a prodigy."

"What would be the best method of extracting it?" asked Birotteau. "Would you do it by decoction, or by pressure?"

"By pressure between two warm plates," replied Vauquelin, "the oil will be greater in quantity; but obtained by pressure between cold plates, the quality will be finer. It must be applied," he continued, kindly, "upon the skin itself, and not upon the hair; otherwise the effect will be wanting."

"Remember that, Popinot," said Birotteau, whose face was glowing with enthusiasm. "You behold, sir," he added, turning to Vauquelin, "a young man who will reckon this day as one of the finest in his life. He knew you and venerated you, even before he saw you. Ah! you are often mentioned at my house, for the name which is always in the heart comes often to the lips. My wife, my daughter and I pray for you every day, as we ought to do for our benefactor."

"It is too much for the little I have done," said Vauquelin, rather bored by the diffuse gratitude of the perfumer.

"There! there!" said Birotteau, "you cannot prevent us from loving you—you who will never accept any recompense from me. You are like the sun: you throw out your light, and those upon whom you shine can give you nothing in return."

The scholar smiled and rose, and the perfumer and Popinot rose also.

"Take a good look at this room, Anselme," said Birotteau. "Monsieur Vauquelin's time is too precious to be often disturbed, and perhaps you will never come here again."

"Well, and how is business?" asked Vauquelin, leading the way from the room.

"Business is pretty fair," replied Birotteau, moving toward the dining-room, whither Vauquelin followed him. "But to introduce this oil under the name of Essence of Comagène requires a large sum of money—"

"Essence and Comagène are two words which should not be put together," interrupted Vauquelin. "Call your cosmetic Huile de Birotteau; or, if you do not choose to use your own name, take a fictitious one. But there is the Dresden Madonna! Ah! Monsieur Birotteau, do you want us to have a quarrel?"

"Monsieur Vauquelin," said the perfumer, taking the chemist by both hands, "this rare picture is of value only by reason of the perseverance which has been necessary in order to find it. I had to hunt all through Germany for this particular print which I knew you desired; it was impossible for you to leave your occupations in order to seek for it, and so I constituted myself your traveling agent; that was all. Accept then, not a mere picture, but the cares and the steps which were necessary to prove an absolute devotion. I could have wished that you had desired something which would have had to be sought for at the bottom of a precipice, that I might have brought it to you, saying: 'Here it is; do not refuse it from me.' We are so little likely to be remembered by you—myself, my wife, my daughter, and my future son-in-law—that I beg of you to allow me to place this picture always before your eyes, so that when you look upon the Virgin you will say to yourself: 'There are some people who are thinking of me.'"

"I accept," said Vauquelin, gently; and the eyes of both Popinot and Birotteau filled with tears as they listened to the tone in which the academician said the two words.

"Will you give me one more proof of your goodness?" asked the perfumer, then.

"What is it?" asked Vauquelin.

"I intend to gather together a few friends"—here he rose upon tip-toe, and settled back again upon his heels, with an assumed expression of humility—"to celebrate the liberation of the country, as well as my own nomination to the order of the Legion of Honor."

"Ah!" exclaimed Vauquelin, astonished.

"Possibly I am deemed worthy of this signal and royal favor because I have had a seat at the consular tribunal, and have fought for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint Roch on the 13th Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon," continued César. "My wife intends giving a ball in about twenty days, and I entreat you, sir, to be present. Will you also do us the honor to dine with us upon that day? I shall then feel that I have received the Cross twice over. I will let you know the exact day, in time."

"Well, yes," said Vanquelin.

"My heart is bursting with delight," cried the perfumer, as soon as they were once more in the street. "He has consented to come to my house! I am so afraid I have forgotten what he said about hair; do you remember it, Popinot?"

"Yes, sir," replied the clerk; "and if I were to live a hundred years I never should forget it."

"He is a great man!" said Birotteau. "What a penetration he has! He did not need to hesitate; he guessed our thoughts at once, and gave us the means

of conquering the 'Huile de Macassar.' Ah! nothing can make the hair grow; and, Macassar, you are a liar! Popinot, we hold a fortune within our grasp. And so, to-morrow at seven o'clock we will be at the manufactory, the nuts will come, and we will make the oil; he has said that one oil is as good as another, but we should be lost if the public were to know that. Besides, if we do not make our oil out of hazel-nuts, what excuse will we have for selling it at three or four francs for four ounces?"

"You will be decorated, sir," said Popinot. "What glory for—"

"For commerce, is it not, my boy?" interrupted César.

The triumphant manner of Birotteau, now sure of a fortune, did not escape the notice of his clerks, who were indulging in all sorts of romances on the strength of the carriage expedition, and the unusually good understanding which evidently existed between César and Anselme, and which betrayed itself by an occasional knowing interchange of looks, and by the hopeful glances which Popinot, once or twice, cast toward Césarine. In their secluded life, the slightest incidents had weight, and even the manner of Madame César, who responded to the Olympian looks of her husband by glances of doubt, betrayed that some new enterprise was on foot; for under ordinary circumstances this would have been a happy day for her, since the receipts had reached the unusually large sum of six thousand francs, some back debts having been paid.

The dining-room and kitchen, the latter lighted from a little court, and separated from the dining-room by a small passage, whence a little staircase descended to the backshop, were on the floor where César and Constance had first made their home after they were married; and therefore the dining-room, where the honeymoon had been spent, had rather the appearance of a little parlor. During dinner Raguet, the trusty shop-boy, had sole charge of the shop; but when dessert was brought on, all the clerks went downstairs again, and left César, his wife and daughter to finish dinner cozily by themselves. This habit they had taken from the Ragons, who, according to the old-fashioned custom, kept the dividing-line between masters and apprentices strictly defined.

At these times Césarine or Constance would bring to the perfumer his cup of coffee, which he would drink sitting in an easy chair beside the fire. And then he would relate to his wife and daughter all the little events of the day, and tell them what had been going on in Paris, and what he had seen and done in the shop and neighborhood.

"My dear," he said, when on this particular occasion the clerks had gone away and they were left alone, "this has certainly been one of the most important days of our life! The nuts are bought, the hydraulic press is ready for use the first thing to-morrow, and the real estate affair is settled. Here, keep this carefully," he said, handing her Pillerault's draft. "The alteration of our house is decided upon," he continued, "and the size of our premises increased. By the way, I have seen such an odd man to-day;" and he described Monsieur Molineux to them.

"As far as I can see," said his wife, interrupting him in the midst of a tirade, "you have run into debt to the extent of two hundred thousand francs."

"It is too true, my dear," replied the perfumer, with mock humility. "How do you suppose we shall ever pay it? for of course the land around the Madeleine goes for nothing, although it is destined some day to become the finest neighborhood in Paris."

"Some day, César!" said his wife, significantly.

"Alas!" sighed the perfumer, continuing his harmless raillery, "my three-eighths will not be worth a million for five or six years. And how shall we ever pay two hundred thousand francs?" he added, with an assumed look of terror. "Well," he continued, "perhaps we will pay it with this;" and he drew from his pocket a hazel-nut taken from Madame Madou's stock, and cherished with the greatest care.

He held the little nut up between his

thumb and finger, so that Césarine and his wife could see it. The latter said nothing, but Césarine, deceived by his manner, said to him as she brought him his coffee:

"Ah, papa, you are joking?"

The perfumer, as well as his clerks, had noticed the interchange of glances between Anselme and Césarine at dinner, and now he resolved to verify his suspicions.

"Well, my daughter," he said, "this nut will be the cause of an alteration in our domestic arrangements. After to-night, there will be one person the less under our roof."

Césarine looked at her father, as much as to say: "What do I care?"

"Popinot is going away," he continued.

Although César was by no means a keen observer, he could not help noticing the rosy blush which flew to Césarine's cheek, and even spread to neck and brow as she lowered her eyes in confusion. As he saw it, it seemed to him an evidence that words, as well as glances, had been interchanged between the two. But in this he was mistaken; the young people understood each other without a word, as timid lovers are sure to do.

It may appear singular and unaccountable at first sight that Césarine should care for a poor lad who was lame and red-headed; but it came about very naturally, after all. Every man who has a personal deformity, no matter of what nature, is obliged, in order to overcome the effects of the evil, to adopt one of two courses: he must either become renowned, or his character must be of extraordinary worth; he cannot afford to float upon the waves of mediocrity like other men. Anselme, brought up by virtuous people, the Ragons, who were models of the most honorable and respectable of the middle classes, and his uncle, Judge Popinot, had succeeded in redeeming his slight bodily defect by the perfection of his character. Constance and César, touched by his admirable qualities, had often praised him in the highest terms in Césarine's hearing; and these praises had found a ready echo in the young girl's heart; for, in spite of her innocence, she had been able to read in Anselme's honest eyes a strong passion, always flattering to a woman, whatever may be the age, the rank, or the appearance of the lover.

Little Popinot was capable of loving a wife unselfishly, devotedly, and constantly; and Césarine knew this instinctively. With her mother's happiness before her eyes, she wished for no other life, and her instinct showed her in Anselme a second César, made more perfect by education, as she herself was. She dreamed of future honors for Popinot, in which she was to share, and she ended finally by being unable to distinguish the difference between his left leg and his right. She loved his clear eyes, and was secretly pleased that a look from her would cause them first to shine with sudden fire, and then to droop sadly.

Roguin's chief clerk, Alexander Crottat, had a cynical, bantering manner, which was intensely disagreeable to Césarine, who despised his commonplace conversation, and contrasted it most unfavorably with Popinot's silence or gentle words. Their tastes were similar, and they both despised petty vulgarities. But in spite of Anselme's superiority to most of his companions, he did not hesitate to work with might and main; and his indefatigable ardor pleased Césarine, who guessed that although the other clerks were saying among themselves, "Césarine is going to marry Monsieur Roguin's head clerk," Anselme, though poor, lame, and red-headed, did not despair of winning her hand; and the strength of a man's hope proves the strength of his love.

"Where is he going?" asked Césarine, vainly striving to appear indifferent as she answered her father's last remark.

"He is going to set up for himself in the Rue des Cinq Diamants. Upon my word!" said Birotteau, much to the mystification of his wife and daughter, who could not understand his exclamation.

But he merely used it as a means of escape from a difficult position. When he met with a conversational snag he

was like an insect before an obstacle; he twisted around it, right or left; and so now he changed the conversation, promising himself that he would talk the matter over with his wife when they were alone.

"I told your uncle about your ideas and fears of Roguin," he said to Constance, "and he laughed at them."

"You should not tell things that we say between ourselves," cried Constance reproachfully. "I daresay poor Roguin is one of the most honest men in the world; he is fifty-eight years old, and ought to know better than to—"

She checked herself suddenly, with a glance at Césarine's attentive face.

"Then I did well to conclude the bargain," said Birotteau.

"You are the master," she replied.

César took his wife's face between the palms of his hands, and kissed her on the forehead. This reply of hers was always a tacit consent to her husband's projects.

"Come," said the perfumer, going downstairs and addressing his clerks; "the shop will close at ten o'clock. Gentlemen, I shall need your help. During the night, all the furniture must be carried from the first to the second floor, to make room for the architect, who will want a clear space for his work. Popinot has gone out without my permission," he continued, not seeing him. "Oh, but I forgot that he does not sleep here. He has gone," he thought, "either to think over Monsieur Vauquelin's ideas, or to hire the shop."

"We know the cause of this disturbance," said Célestin, speaking in the name of the two other clerks and Raguet, who were grouped behind him. "May we be permitted to congratulate you upon an honor which reflects upon the whole shop? Popinot has told us that—"

"Well, yes," replied César, striving to speak with suitable modesty, "the fact is, I have received the Cross. And therefore, not only because of the liberation of the country, but also to celebrate my promotion to the Legion of Honor, we propose to make a little gathering of our friends. It is possible that I have been deemed worthy of this signal and royal favor by sitting at the consular tribunal, and by fighting for the royal cause, which I defended—at your age—on the steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th Vendémiaire; and upon my word! Napoleon, the so-called emperor, wounded me. I was wounded in the thigh, and Madame Ragon took care of me. You see, my boys, that misfortune is never without some gain. Be courageous, and you will be rewarded."

"But they do not fight in the streets now," said Célestin.

"I should hope not, indeed," said César; and proceeding to rebuke his clerks, he finished by giving them an invitation to the ball.

IX.

THE prospect of the ball animated the three clerks, Raguet, and Virginie the cook, to such an extent that they took hold of the furniture with a will, and by two o'clock in the morning everything was moved without injury. César and his wife slept on the second floor; Popinot's room was occupied by Célestin and one of the junior clerks; and the third floor was used as a temporary store-house.

Possessed by the excitement and ardor of a great hope, Popinot, usually so gentle and quiet, was in a state of great activity and commotion when the clerks came down to the shop after dinner that night.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Célestin.

"I have had such a wonderful day," said Anselme. And whispering in the ear of the chief clerk, he added, "I am to begin business for myself, and Monsieur César has received the Cross."

"You are lucky to have master help you!" cried Celestin.

Popinot did not reply, but disappeared as if blown out of the shop by a whirlwind, the whirlwind of success.

"Oh! as for being lucky," said one of the clerks to another, "master has seen the sheeps' eyes that Popinot has been casting upon Mademoiselle Césarine, and, like a wise man, has decided to rid him-

self of Anselme. It might be difficult for him to refuse him as a son-in-law, on account of his relatives. And Célestin calls that generosity!"

Anselme Popinot went down the Rue Saint-Honoré, and hurried to the Rue des Deux-Ecus, in search of a certain young man whom his commercial clairvoyance told him would be one of the principal instruments in making his fortune. Judge Popinot had at one time had the opportunity of serving one of the cleverest traveling agents in Paris, a man whose gift of eloquent small-talk and whose activity caused him to be justly celebrated, later. At this time, only twenty-two years of age, he was already celebrated for the power of his commercial magnetism. Lithe and slender, with a bright eye, an expressive face, an indefatigable memory, and a tact which seized upon each one's peculiar tastes, he was worthy of becoming, as he did in after life, the very prince of traveling agents.

Popinot knew the claim which he had upon this man, whose name was Gaudissart. Just after the Hundred Days, the clever agent, who knew so well how to twist around his finger that most rebellious class of people, the petty provincial merchants, became himself involved in the first conspiracy against the reinstated Bourbons, and found himself in prison, under the weight of a capital accusation. Judge Popinot, who saw that it was only the young man's foolish indiscretion which had drawn him into this difficulty, and who had the charge of the affair, succeeded in obtaining his release. Gaudissart, realizing that a judge who had been desirous merely of currying favor with the reigning power would probably have condemned him to the scaffold, looked upon Judge Popinot as the savior of his life, and was in despair at not being able to give him any visible proof of gratitude. He felt that it would be hardly suitable to thank a judge for having made a just decision, and the most that he could do was to go to the Ragons and declare himself the faithful servant of the Popinots forever.

Some days ago, Popinot had met Gaudissart, who had told him that he was about to set forth on another trip; and the hope of finding that he had not yet gone, made Anselme fly to the Rue des Deux-Ecus, to learn that the traveler had already engaged his place in the mail-coach, and that by way of taking leave of Paris, he had gone to see a new piece at the Vaudeville.

Popinot resolved to wait for him. If he could get this man to introduce the nut-oil for him, would it not be a genuine bill of exchange upon Fortune? While he was waiting, he naturally went to have another look at the shop in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants, and to ask the address of the proprietor, in order to negotiate for the lease. As he was sauntering through the obscure labyrinth of the great market, and meditating upon the means of achieving rapid success, he met with a rare and lucky opportunity, in the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, of which he immediately took advantage, and with the details of which he delighted his master on the following morning.

At last, as he was standing sentry at the door of the Hotel du Commerce, at the end of the Rue des Deux-Ecus, about midnight, he heard in the distance a final vaudeville sung in Gaudissart's voice, with accompaniment beaten by a cane upon the pavement.

"Sir," said Anselme, starting from the doorway and showing himself suddenly, "can I have two words with you?"

"A dozen, if you like," replied the other, promptly lifting his loaded cane against his aggressor.

"I am Popinot," said poor Anselme.

"Oh, then, it is all right!" said Gaudissart, recognizing him. "What do you need? Some money? Mine is absent on parole, but I can easily find some for you. My arm for a duel? I am entirely at your service, from head to foot." And he sung:

"Voilà, voilà,
Le vrai soldat français!"

"Come and talk with me for ten minutes," said Popinot; "but not in your room, for some one might hear us. Come

to the Quai de l'Horloge; at this hour no one will be there. It is something very important."

"Very well, go ahead," replied Gaudissart.

In ten minutes he was possessed of Popinot's secret, and had recognized its importance.

"Paraissez, parfumeurs, coiffeurs et débitants!"

he sung, paraphrasing Lafon in the role of the Cid. "I will wheedle every shopkeeper in France. Oh! I have an idea. I was just about to go away, but I will stay here a while longer, and will take commissions from all the Parisian perfumers."

"What for?" asked Anselme.

"To strangle your rivals, stupid!" he replied. "I won't say anything about their worthless old cosmetics, but will occupy myself exclusively with yours. It is a well-known trick of traveling agents! We are the diplomats of commerce! That will be famous! As for your prospectus, I will take care of that. I have an old friend, Andoche Finot, who is up in that sort of thing; writes plays, and all that; he will be glad to do it for me *gratis*, and he knows all about what is wanted. I can give him a bowl of punch and some cake, and that will be all the reward he will want. Now see here, Popinot! I don't want any nonsense about this thing, or any talk of paying me. I can make enough out of your rivals to pay me, and I want it distinctly understood. The success of the venture is an affair of honor with me, and all the recompense I want is to be 'best man' at your wedding. I shall go to Italy, Germany and England; I shall take handbills in every language, and stick them up everywhere, in villages, at church-doors, and in every good place I can find in the provincial towns! I will make your oil sparkle and burn; it shall shine on every head. You shall yet have your Césarine!"

Popinot went back to his aunt's house and went to bed, with his head so full of the new scheme that when he shut his eyes he seemed to see the streets filled with rivers of oil. He could not sleep much, and when he did, he dreamed that his hair was growing with most alarming rapidity, and that he saw two angels, who unrolled before him a scroll, on which was written: "Huile Césarienne." When he awoke, and recalled his dream, he resolved to give this name to the oil, regarding the fanciful dream as a celestial vision and command.

The next morning César and Popinot were at their workshop in the Faubourg du Temple in good season, long before the nuts arrived; while waiting for them, Popinot triumphantly related his alliance with Gaudissart.

"Now that we have the celebrated Gaudissart, we are millionaires!" exclaimed the perfumer, extending his hand to his clerk with an air which Louis XIV. might have adopted when welcoming the Marechal de Villars on his return from Denain.

"And there is something else," said the happy clerk, drawing from his pocket a bottle shaped like a pumpkin; "I found ten thousand flasks like this one, all made and ready, at four sous, payable at six months."

"Anselme," said Birotteau in a solemn tone, "yesterday, in the Tuileries—yes, no longer ago than yesterday, you said: 'I shall succeed!' To-day, I also say: You will succeed. Four sous! at six months! an original form! Macassar wavers at this blow! Did I not do well to purchase all the hazel-nuts in Paris? Where did you find these flasks?"

"I was waiting until it was time to see Gaudissart," replied Anselme, "and I was sauntering along—"

"Just as I was, the other day!" cried Birotteau.

"As I was going down the Rue Aubry le Boucher, I saw in the window of a glass-seller's shop — an immense warehouse, where they keep all kinds of glassware —I saw this flask. Ah! it dazzled my eyes like a sudden flash of light, and a voice seemed to say to me: 'That is what you want!'"

"He is born to be a merchant; he shall have my daughter," muttered César to himself.

"I entered," continued Anselme, "and I saw thousands of these flasks in boxes."

"You asked about them!" exclaimed César.

"Do you think I didn't know any better than that?" demanded Anselme, piteously.

"He is born to be a merchant!" repeated Birotteau.

"I asked for some glass globes to put over little waxen images," continued Anselme. "Then, while bargaining for them, I criticised the shape of these flasks. Gradually led on, my merchant confessed at last that Faille & Bouchot, who failed recently, had undertaken a new cosmetic, and wanted flasks of an unusual form for it; he was a little suspicious of them, and made them pay half the money down. In the hope of pulling through all right, they paid the money, but the failure came out while the flasks were being made. The assignees, when called upon to pay the rest, made an arrangement with him by which he kept the bottles, and the money already paid on them. They cost eight sous apiece, and he would be delighted to sell them now for four, for God only knows how long he would be likely to have them on hand, being such a peculiar shape. At last I said to him: 'Will you agree to furnish ten thousand of them at four sous? I can help you to get rid of your bottles; I am one of Monsieur Birotteau's clerks.' And we talked it over, and the result is, he is ours!"

"Four sous!" said Birotteau. "Do you realize that we can sell the oil for three francs, and then make thirty sous profit, leaving twenty for the retailers?"

"The Huile Césarienne!" cried Popinot.

"The Huile Césarienne?" echoed Birotteau. "Ah, monsieur the lover, you would flatter both father and daughter! Well, so be it. Hurrah for the Huile Césarienne. The Césars were masters of the world, and probably had fine hair."

"César was bald," said Popinot.

"Well, then," returned Birotteau, "we can say that it was because he did not use our oil! The Huile Césarienne for three francs, and the Huile de Macassar costs twice that! With Gaudissart on our side, we will get a hundred thousand francs in a year, for everybody who uses one flask a year will use a dozen. Why! we are millionaires!"

When the nuts arrived, Raguet, the workmen, Popinot, and César cleaned a sufficient quantity of them, and before four o'clock they had several pounds of oil. Popinot took it to Vauquelin for his inspection, and the chemist presented him with a formula for mixing the extract of nuts with a less expensive oleaginous body, and Popinot immediately proceeded to take out a patent for the invention, and to perfect it. The devoted Gaudissart lent Popinot the money for the fiscal right, for the perfumer's clerk was very ambitious to pay his half of the expenses of the new undertaking.

Prosperity brings with it a sort of intoxication which it is not easy for men of inferior minds to resist; and in this case the exaltation had the very effect upon Birotteau which might have been predicted. Grindot came, and exhibited a colored sketch of a charming interior view of the future domicile, filled with furniture. Birotteau was delighted with it, and agreed to everything; and the masons proceeded to give their first blows, making both the house and Constance groan. The house-painter, Monsieur Lourdois, a rich contractor who promised to neglect nothing, spoke of gilding for the salon. But here Constance interfered.

"Monsieur Lourdois," she said, "you have an income of thirty thousand pounds, you live in your own house, and you can afford to do as you please with it; but we—"

"Madame," he said, as she paused, "commerce ought never to allow itself to be outshone or crushed by the aristocracy. And besides that, Monsieur Birotteau is in the government—"

"Yes, but he is also in the shop," rejoined Constance; "and neither I, nor he, nor his friends, nor his enemies, will forget that."

Birotteau raised himself several times

upon tiptoe and fell back upon his heels, his hands clasped behind his back.

"My wife is right," he said. "We will be modest in prosperity. Besides, while a man is in business, he ought to be prudent in his expenses and moderate in his luxuries. If the enlargement of my premises and their new decorations should exceed proper limits, you yourself, Lourdois, would be one of the first to blame me. The neighborhood has its eye upon me; and there are always plenty of people to be envious and jealous of a successful man. We will not give them an excuse to slander us if we can help it."

"Slander cannot touch you," said Lourdois. "You are too well-established in business for that."

"It is true," admitted Birotteau, "that I have had some little experience in business. I suppose you know why we are making all these alterations, and why I have laid such stress upon punctuality?"

"No," replied the painter.

"Well," continued César, "it is because my wife and I are thinking of inviting some of our friends here, as much in honor of the liberation of the country as to celebrate my promotion to the order of the Legion of Honor."

"What! what!" said Lourdois; "have they given you the Cross?"

"Yes," replied Birotteau. "Possibly I have been thought worthy of this signal and royal favor because I formerly had a seat at the consular tribunal, and also because I fought for the royal cause on the 13th Vendemiaire, at Saint Roch, where I was wounded by Napoleon. Come, and bring your wife and daughter."

"Enchanted at the honor, I am sure," replied Lourdois. "You are very cunning, Monsieur Birotteau; you want to make sure that I keep my word to you, and so you give me an invitation. Well! I will employ my best workmen, and we will keep up a furious fire to dry the paint; we have certain drying preparations which we will use, for it would not do to dance in a fog caused by damp plaster. We will varnish it all, to take away the odor."

Three days later, all the business people in the neighborhood were in commotion at the news of the ball which Birotteau was preparing to give, and at the sight of the outside scaffolding necessitated by the rapid alteration of the staircase, and of the square wooden pipes through which all the rubbish was thrown down into carts placed beneath to receive it. The busy workmen working by torchlight—for there were two sets of workmen, one for day and the other for night—drew the attention of all the idlers in the street, and the gossips made these preparations the basis for announcing all kinds of magnificence.

X.

On the Sunday indicated for the termination of the business, Monsieur and Madame Ragon and Uncle Pillerault came at four o'clock, directly after vespers. In view of the repairs, César had announced that on this day he could only invite Charles Claparon, Crottat, and Roguin. The notary brought with him the "Journal des Débats," which contained the following article, inserted by Monsieur de la Billardière:

"We learn that the liberation of territory is to be fêted with enthusiasm throughout France, and that in Paris the members of the municipal body feel it particularly expedient to restore to the capital that splendor which, from a sense of propriety, ceased during the foreign occupation. Each one of the mayors and the deputies, therefore, proposes to give a ball, and the winter promises to be a most brilliant one in consequence. Among all the entertainments which are contemplated, the ball about to be given by Monsieur Birotteau, recently named a chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and so well-known from his devotion to the royalist cause, is among the most noteworthy. Monsieur Birotteau, wounded at the affair of Saint Roch, on the 13th Vendémiaire, and one of the most esteemed of the consular judges, has doubly merited the honor which has just been conferred upon him."

"How well that is written!" exclaimed César. "They speak of us in the 'Journal,'" he added, turning to Uncle Pillerault.

"Well, what of it?" replied the old man, who had a particular antipathy for the "Journal des Débats."

"Perhaps this article will help the sale of the Pâte des Sultanes and the Eau Carminative," said Madame César in a low tone to Madame Ragon. The perfumer's lady did not by any means share her husband's exultation.

Madame Ragon, a tall woman, withered and wrinkled, with a pinched nose and thin lips, had something of the appearance of a marquise of the old court. Her countenance, severe but affable, commanded respect. There was, besides, something strange about her which drew attention without exciting ridicule, and which her appearance and manners perhaps explained. She always wore mittens, and in all weathers carried an umbrella like that which Queen Marie Antoinette used at Trianon. Her dress, usually of that pale brown called dead leaf, spread itself out in innumerable folds at the hips, in a way that the dowagers of old alone knew how to achieve. She still continued to wear a black mantilla trimmed with black lace made in great square meshes. She took snuff with the exquisite propriety and the appropriate gestures which some of those young people may remember who have had the good fortune to see their great-aunts and their grandmothers place their gold boxes solemnly near them on the table, and shake off stray grains of snuff from their lace fichus.

Monsieur Ragon was a little man, scarcely five feet tall, with a face like a nut-cracker, where nothing was visible save eyes, two sharp cheek-bones, a nose and a chin; he had no teeth, and mumbled half his words; his conversation was diffuse; he was always gallant, and always smiling the smile which he used to wear to receive the fine ladies who occasionally came to his shop-door in the olden times. His skull displayed a snowy half moon drawn on it by powder, and he wore a tiny queue, tied with a ribbon. His coat was bluebottle, his waistcoat white, his small-clothes and stockings silk, his shoe-buckles gold, and his gloves black silk. His most conspicuous characteristic was to go along the streets with his hat in his hand. He looked like a messenger from the Chamber of Peers, or an officer from the king's cabinet, or one of those people who have a position near some one in authority, but who are not of much consequence themselves.

"Well, Birotteau," he said, with a magisterial air, "are you sorry you listened to us? Have we ever doubted the gratitude of our beloved sovereigns?"

"You must be very happy, my dear," said Madame Ragon to Madame Birotteau.

"Yes, indeed," replied the beautiful Constance, under the influence of the umbrella, the butterfly bonnet, the large sleeves and the great fichu which Madame Ragon wore.

"Césarine is charming. Come here, dear child," said Madame Ragon in her deep voice and with her patronizing air.

"Shall we get to business before dinner?" asked Uncle Pillerault.

"We are waiting for Monsieur Claparon," said Roguin. "He was dressing to come, when I left him."

"Monsieur Roguin," said César, "I hope you gave him fair warning that we are to dine in a wretched little *entre-sol*."

"He used to think it was superb, sixteen years ago," murmured Constance.

"In the midst of rubbish and among the workmen," continued César.

"Pshaw! He is a good fellow, and not at all difficult to please," said Roguin.

"I have posted Raguet as sentry in the shop," said César to the notary. "Our door is no longer passable; as you see, they have torn down everything."

"Why did you not bring your nephew?" asked Pillerault of Madame Ragon.

"Is he not coming?" inquired Césarine.

"No, my love," replied Madame Ragon. "Anselme, the dear boy, is working hard enough to kill himself. That frightful, evil-smelling Rue des

Cinq-Diamants has neither air nor sun, and the gutter is always blue, green or black. I am afraid he will make himself sick. But when young people once get a thing into their head!—" and she made a gesture which was equivalent to substituting the word *heart* for *head*.

"Has he taken his lease?" asked César.

"Yes, it was signed yesterday before a notary," replied Ragon. "He succeeded in getting one for eighteen years, but they exacted six months' rent in advance."

"Well, Monsieur Ragon," asked the perfumer, "are you satisfied with what I have done for him? I have given him the secret of a discovery which—"

"We know and appreciate you, César," said the little old man, taking the perfumer's hands and pressing them with reverent affection.

Roguin was not without uneasiness as to the impression which Claparon's manners might make upon the assembled friends, and felt it rather necessary to prepared their minds for his advent. Therefore, addressing Ragon, Pillerault, and the ladies, he remarked:

"You are about to meet an eccentric person whose real worth is concealed beneath frightfully bad manners; for, from a very low rank in life, he has made his way solely by his own talents. He will without doubt improve, when he has had more opportunities of associating with cultivated people. To meet him on the boulevard or in a café, drinking and disheveled, you might think him a dissipated fellow; but you would be very much mistaken; he is a great student, and is always thinking out new ideas."

"I can understand that," said Birotteau. "My best ideas have come to me when I have been strolling about the streets; have they not, my love?"

"Claparon, like all talented people," resumed Roguin, "leads an odd and inexplicable life. But this very oddity makes him successful. In this matter of ours, now, he has induced all the different proprietors to agree to our proposition. They did not want to at first, and held back because they suspected something; but he kept at them, and the result is, here we are, practically masters of the land."

At this moment a sort of "broum! broum!" peculiar to those who drink brandy and strong liquors, announced the arrival of the most singular personage of this story, the man who was the visible arbiter of César's future destinies. The perfumer hastened down the little dark staircase, for the double purpose of telling Raguet to close the shop and of apologizing to Claparon for receiving him in the dining-room.

"But that is a very good place for transacting business," replied the pretended banker.

In spite of Roguin's clever preparations, the company were by no means pleased with the appearance of the new-comer. He was about twenty-eight years old, and as he had not a hair on his head, he wore a wig, of corkscrew curls. This style of head-gear seems to demand freshness, transparency and grace of countenance, and it set off, therefore, in very unbecoming relief, his pimpled, red-brown face, with its premature wrinkles, which gave such evidence of a life of dissipation. His countenance, reddened by the fires of strong drink, seemed incompatible with any attention to business, and Du Tillet had found it necessary to give him minute directions as to his appearance and character, in order to keep up the *rôle* which he was about to play. He had assisted at Claparon's toilet on this occasion, as anxious as any manager of a theater at the début of a new actor; for he trembled lest the old careless habits and manners should too startlingly contrast with the new character of banker.

"Speak as little as possible," he told him; "a banker never chatters; he acts, thinks, meditates, listens and considers. Therefore, to appear really like a banker, say nothing, or else say commonplace things. Look grave instead of merry, even at the risk of appearing stupid. If politics are discussed, you must take the side of the Government, and only deal in generalities, such as, for instance: 'The Liberals are dangerous. The Bourbons promise us an era of prosperity; let us

sustain them, if we do not love them. France has had enough of political experiences,' etc. Remember that you have the dignity of a millionaire to preserve. Don't take your snuff like a beggar; play with your snuff-box, look often at the ceiling or the floor before replying, and, in short, try to assume a profound manner. Above all, rid yourself of your unfortunate habit of touching everything you see; a banker would not do that. Abuse the state of business as much as you can; say that things are dull, heavy, difficult of accomplishment; but do not go beyond that; do not specify. Don't sing any of your ribald songs at table, and do not drink too much. If you get tipsy you will ruin your future. Roguin will be watching you, and you will find yourself among moral and virtuous people, and you must not alarm them by any of your coffee-house ways."

This lecture had produced upon Charles Chaparon's mind a similar effect to that which his new clothes had had upon his body. Accustomed to loose, comfortable garments, in which he felt as unconstrained in action as in speech, he was now inclosed in new tightly-fitting apparel, in which he moved stiffly and uneasily, drawing back every now and then the hand which had imprudently advanced toward a flask or box, just as, in like manner, he stopped himself often in the midst of some phrase or remark. His red face and corkscrew wig were strikingly at variance with his general appearance, just as his thoughts were continually warring with his speech. But the worthy people, in whose society he found himself, were good enough to mistake these discords for the result of preoccupation.

"He is so very much absorbed in business," said Roguin.

"Business has done very little for him, in the way of education," remarked Madame Ragon to Césarine.

Monsieur Roguin overheard this, and laid his finger upon his lips.

"He is rich, clever, and excessively honest," he said, stooping toward Madame Ragon.

"A good many things may be excused, in consideration of these qualities," observed Pillerault to Ragon.

"Let us read the deeds before dinner," said Roguin, "since we are alone."

The ladies accordingly left the contracting parties to themselves, to listen to the agreements which Alexander Crottat had drawn up. César signed, to the account of one of Roguin's clients, a bond for forty thousand francs, mortgaged upon the land and the manufactories in the neighborhood of the Temple; he delivered to Roguin Pillerault's draft upon the bank, and gave without receipt the twenty thousand francs' worth of notes from his pocket-book and the hundred and forty thousand francs of bills to Claparon's order.

"I have no receipt to give you," said Claparon; "you act upon your side with Monsieur Roguin, just as we upon ours. Our sellers will receive from him their price in money, and I do not promise to do anything more than to find for you the complement of your part with your deeds for a hundred and forty thousand francs."

"That is fair," said Pillerault.

"And now, gentlemen, let us recall the ladies, for it is cold without them," said Claparon, looking at Roguin askance, to see if his remark had been deemed too free.

"Mademoiselle is doubtless your daughter," he continued, holding himself very stiffly, and addressing Birotteau. "Well, she is a credit to you. None of the roses which you have distilled can be compared to her, and perhaps it is because you have distilled roses, that—"

"Upon my word," said Roguin, interrupting him, "I must say I am hungry."

"Well, let us have dinner," rejoined Birotteau.

"You have a great deal of business to attend to, I suppose," said Pillerault, seating himself intentionally beside the banker, for the old man was closely watching this odd specimen of humanity.

"Oh, a quantity of it," replied Claparon; "but it is very dull; there are canals to be attended to. Oh! the canals! You cannot imagine how the canals occupy us! The Government

wants canals. You see, the canal is a need which makes itself generally felt in the provinces, and in which every kind of commerce is interested. Rivers, as Pascal says, are highways. And then, monsieur, the Chamber gives us so much trouble. It will not understand the political question concealed beneath the financial question. There is bad faith on one side or the other. Shall I tell you something? The Kellers, for example. François Keller is an orator, and he attacks the Government on the subject of funds, or of canals. When he comes back again, he finds us with our propositions, which are favorable, and things have to be arranged with the Government, which he has so insolently attacked. The interests of the orator and those of the banker are sure to conflict, and there we are, between two fires. You understand now why business is such a difficult thing to manage; so many people have to be satisfied: the clerks, the Chambers, the antechambers, the ministers—"

"The ministers?" repeated Pillerault, desirous of thoroughly fathoming the man.

"Yes, sir, the ministers," said Claparon.

"Well, then the journals are right," said Pillerault.

"My uncle has got upon politics," remarked Birotteau.

"The journals are a set of rogues," said Claparon. "Sir, the journals keep us continually stirred up; they do us good service sometimes, but they make me pass cruel nights; I nearly ruin my eyes with reading and writing."

"But what about the ministers?" said Pillerault, hoping for revelations.

"The ministers have purely governmental exigencies," replied Claparon. "But what am I eating?" he interrupted himself; "ambrosia? Truly, it is only in places like this that perfect sauces can be found. Public cooks, non-professional or professional, do not know how to give them to us; they either give clear water, acidulated with citron, or some chemical compound."

The dinner hour was entirely occupied by Pillerault in sounding the depths of the banker's mind; and, finding nothing but emptiness, he regarded him as a dangerous man.

"All is going well," whispered Roguin to Claparon.

"I shall be glad when I can get home and take off these clothes," returned the pretended banker, who was stifling.

"Sir," said Birotteau, addressing him, "the reason that we are obliged to use our dining-room as a parlor is because we intend, in about eighteen days, to make a gathering of our friends, as much to celebrate the liberation of the territory—"

"Good, sir!" interrupted Claparon. "For my part, I am also for the Government. I belong, in my opinions, to the side of the great man who directs the destinies of the House of Austria—a famous fellow! To preserve in order to acquire, and, above all, to acquire in order to preserve—that is the foundation of my opinions, which have the honor of being also those of Prince Metternich."

"—as to celebrate my promotion to the order of the Legion of Honor," continued César, when the other paused.

"Yes, I know," returned Claparon. "Now, who was it who told me of that? Keller or Nucingen?"

At this unexpected exhibition of tact, Roguin made an admiring gesture.

"No," resumed Claparon, "it was at the Chamber."

"Did you hear of it at the Chamber, through Monsieur de la Billardière?" inquired César.

"Exactly!" said Claparon.

"He is charming," remarked César to his uncle.

"He has a plenty of meaningless phrases," returned Pillerault; "they are enough to drown one!"

"It is possible that I may have been considered worthy of this favor—" continued Birotteau, aloud.

"Because of your perfumery," interrupted the banker again; "the Bourbons know how to reward every kind of merit. Ah! let us be faithful to these generous and legitimate princes, to whom we are destined to owe unheard-of prosperity.—

For, take my word for it, the Restoration knows that it must grapple with the Empire; and it will make conquests in time of peace; you will see conquests!"

"Will you do us the honor of attending our ball?" asked Madame Birotteau.

"I would rather pass an evening with you, madame, than win millions," replied the gallant banker.

"The fellow certainly does talk a great deal," said César to his uncle.

XI.

While the glory of the perfumer was about to shine forth with added luster, ere its final eclipse, another star was lifting its feeble light above the commercial horizon. Little Popinot was laying the foundations for his fortune in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants. This little narrow street, where loaded wagons can scarcely pass, extends from the Rue des Lombards at one end, to the Rue Aubry le Boucher, opposite the Rue Quincampoix, at the other; and Popinot had not chosen his situation badly, for there were many dealers in drugs in the neighborhood.

The house, the second from the Rue des Lombards, was so dark that it was often necessary to light it, even in the middle of the day. Popinot had taken possession in the evening, and very dark and uninviting he found it. His predecessor, a dealer in molasses and raw sugar, had left the marks of his merchandise upon the walls, in the court and in the shops. Imagine a large and spacious shop, with great, iron-bound doors, painted dragon-green, with long bands of iron ornamented with nails whose heads resembled mushrooms, provided with latticed iron gratings, and floored with great white stones, most of them broken, the walls yellow and bare as those of a guard-room. Next came a shop in the rear, and a kitchen, lighted from the court; and a second warehouse, which had evidently once been a stable. There was a staircase going up from the back-shop, which led to two rooms looking out upon the street, where Popinot intended keeping his safe, his desk and his books. Above the warerooms were three narrow chambers, lighted from the court, where he intended to live; three dilapidated rooms, which had no other outlook than that afforded by the irregular, dark, walled-in court, where the dampness, even in the dryest weather, made the walls look as if they had been freshly washed; a court between whose stones was a black, offensive filth, left from the accumulation of molasses and sugar. Only one of the rooms had a chimney, and all were unpapered and floored with stone.

Since morning, Gaudissart and Popinot, aided by a paper-hanger whom the traveling-clerk had unearthed, had been putting a cheap paper upon this horrible room. A student's bed upon a red-wood bedstead, a shaky stand, an ancient bureau, a table, two armchairs and six chairs, given by Judge Popinot, comprised the furnishing. Gaudissart had put upon the mantel-piece a pier-glass in which was a wretched mirror bought at a bargain. Toward eight o'clock in the evening, seated before a fire of fagots, the two friends were about to attack the remains of the breakfast.

"Away with the cold mutton! that will not do for us," exclaimed Gaudissart.

"But," said Popinot, showing his sole remaining twenty-franc piece, which he was saving to pay for the prospectus, "I—"

"I—" mocked Gaudissart, putting a forty-franc piece up to his eye.

Just then a loud knocking resounded through the silent and solitary court.

"There is my faithful one from the Rue de la Poterie," said Gaudissart.

And in fact a man, followed by two attendants, appeared, bringing a dinner garnished with six well-chosen bottles of wine.

"How are we going to eat all that?" asked Popinot.

"The man of letters will help us," said Gaudissart. "Finot appreciates the pomps and vanities, and he will be here, armed with his prospectus. Pros-

pectuses are always thirsty, you know; and we must water the seeds if we want the flowers. You may go, slaves," he added, addressing the two attendants banteringly; "here is gold," and he gave them ten sous, with a Napoleonic gesture.

"Thanks, Monsieur Gaudissart," they replied even more pleased with the joke than with the money.

"And as for you, my son," he added to the man who had remained behind to wait upon them, "there is a porter's wife, who lives in a den somewhere down below, where she occasionally does a little cooking, for the same reason that Nausicaa in old times used to do her washing—purely for the love of the thing. Go down to her, and get her interested, young man, in the warming of these dishes. Tell her that she will have the blessing, and above all, the respect, the great respect, of Felix Gaudissart, son of Jean François Gaudissart, grandson of innumerable Gaudissarts, old vagabonds without any ancestors at all. Go on, now, and see that everything is as it should be, or I will be after you with a stick."

Another knock resounded through the court.

"Here is the lovely Andoche," said Gaudissart.

A great chubby fellow, of medium height, with round features, whose cunning intelligence was concealed beneath a gluttonous manner, entered abruptly. His face, saddened like that of a man accustomed to misery, suddenly grew joyous as he saw the well-covered table, and the attractive-looking bottles. At Gaudissart's welcome, his pale blue eyes sparkled, his great head went from right to left, and he bowed to Popinot with a peculiar manner, partaking neither of servility nor respect; like a man who feels that he is out of place, but will make no concession.

He was just beginning to realize that he possessed no literary talent; and he had made up his mind to be a sort of literary adventurer, mounting upon better men's shoulders, and making a business matter of it, instead of a matter of reputation. But he needed something for a beginning, and Gaudissart had convinced him that Popinot's oil was what he wanted.

"Show him up in the journals, but don't say anything against him, or you and I will have a duel," said Gaudissart. "Give him his money's worth."

Popinot looked at the so-called author uneasily. People who are exclusively brought up to commerce have a way of regarding an author with a mingled feeling of terror, compassion and curiosity. Although Popinot had been well brought up, the habits and ideas of his relatives, and the stupefying routine of a shop had modified his intelligence, bending it to the uses and customs of his profession; a phenomenon which may be observed after the lapse of ten years among a hundred men who have left college at about the same time. Andoche accepted Popinot's manner as a mark of profound admiration.

"Well! before dinner, let us just run over the prospectus, and then we can drink without anything on our minds," said Gaudissart. "After dinner it is not so easy to read; one's tongue is apt to go astray."

"Sir," said Popinot, "a prospectus is often a whole fortune."

"And for poor devils like me," said Andoche, "fortune is only a prospectus."

"Ha! very good!" said Gaudissart. "This rogue of an Andoche has considerable wit."

"Immense!" said Popinot, deeply impressed.

The impatient Gaudissart took the manuscript, and read aloud and with emphasis: "Huile Céphalique!"

"I should like 'Huile Césarienne' better," observed Popinot.

"My dear fellow," said Gaudissart, "you do not know these provincial people; there is a surgical operation which bears that name, and they are just stupid enough to take it into their heads that this oil is intended for that purpose; and to get them from that to the hair would be too much of a pull."

"Without defending my choice of a name," said the author, "I will call your

attention to the fact that Huile Cephalique means oil for the head, and therefore explains your idea."

"Go on," said Popinot, eagerly.

The following is the prospectus, just as it is read by thousands, even to this day.

"Golden Medal at the Exposition of 1819. Huile Céphalique. Patents of invention and perfection.

"No cosmetic can make the hair grow, just as no chemical preparation can be used to color it, without danger to the seat of intelligence. Science has recently declared that the hair is a dead substance, and that no artificial agent can prevent it from falling or whitening. To obviate these evils, it is only necessary to preserve from all exterior atmospheric influences the bulbs from which the hairs grow, and to maintain an even temperature upon the head. The Huile Cephalique, based upon these principles established by the Academy of Sciences, produces this important result, which was attained by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and those Northern nations to whom a good head of hair was a precious possession. Learned researches have demonstrated that the nobles, who were formerly distinguished for the length of their hair, used no other method; their process, unfortunately lost, has recently been re-discovered by A. Popinot, inventor of the Huile Cephalique.

"The intention of the Huile Cephalique is to preserve, instead of seeking to stimulate the growth of the hair. This oil, which is opposed to the exfoliation of the cuticle, breathes forth a delightful odor, and by means of the substances of which it is composed, in which the principal element is the extract of hazel-nuts, prevents all action of the exterior air upon the head, thereby preventing colds, influenzas, and all similar maladies. In this way the bulbs, which contain the generative particles of the hair, are preserved from extremes either of heat or cold. The hair, that magnificent product to which both men and women attach such value, preserves thus, even to the old age of the person who uses the Huile Cephalique, that brilliancy, fineness and luster which make children's heads so charming.

"The directions for using this oil are printed upon the wrapper of each bottle.

"Directions for using the Huile Cephalique:

"It is utterly useless to anoint the hair itself; this is not only a ridiculous prejudice, but a harmful one, since every cosmetic leaves its traces. It is enough to soak each morning a little, fine sponge in the oil, to separate the hair with a comb, after having previously cleaned the head with a brush and comb, and to wash the scalp lightly with the preparation.

"This oil is sold by the bottle, and each bottle bears the signature of the inventor, to prevent counterfeits. Price three francs, at A. Popinot's, Rue des Cinq-Diamants, Paris.

"Please address all communications post-paid.

"N.B.—The establishment of A. Popinot also deals in other drugs and oils, like essence of orange flowers, oil of aspic, almond oil, oil of cocoanut, oil of coffee, castor-oil, etc."

"My dear friend," said Gaudissart to Finot, "it is simply perfect. There is no twisting and turning about it; you go straight to the point. I congratulate you sincerely; it is a fine piece of work."

"It is a beautiful prospectus," said Popinot, enthusiastically.

"A prospectus whose very first word will be the death of Macassar," said Gaudissart, rising with a magisterial air, and emphasizing his words by parliamentary gestures. "The — hair — can — not — be made—to grow! It can not—be—dyed—without danger! Ah, ha! there is success! Modern science agrees with the habits of the ancients. That will take both with old and young. You can say to an old man: 'Ah! monsieur, the ancients, the Greeks and Romans, knew something, after all, and were not such stupid fellows as some folks think.' If you are talking to a young man, you can say, 'My dear boy, thanks to our progressive age, here is another discovery. What can we not look for, as the results

of steam, the telegraph, etc.! This oil is the result of a report by Monsieur Vauquelin.' Suppose we were to quote a passage from Monsieur Vauquelin's essay at the Academy of Sciences, confirming our assertions, eh! Famous! Come, Finot, come to the table. Let us attack the food and drink champagne to the success of our young friend."

"It was my idea," said the author modestly, "that the epoch for light and frivolous prospectuses had passed; we are entering upon a scientific period, and we must assume a tone of learning and authority, in order to make an impression upon the public."

"We will warm this oil! I am anxious to be off," said Gaudissart. "I have commissions from all the dealers in goods for the hair, and not one of them gives more than thirty per cent; now if we can offer forty per cent profit, I will answer for the sale of a hundred thousand bottles in six months. I will attack apothecaries, grocers and hairdressers; and by giving them forty per cent we shall secure them."

The three young men were eating like lions, and drinking like Swiss, to the future success of the "Huile Cephalique," when a resounding knock was heard.

"That must be my uncle, come to see me," exclaimed Popinot.

"An uncle?" said Finot; "and we have not another glass!"

"Popinot's uncle is a judge," said Gaudissart to Finot, "and there is no use in making a mystery of the fact that he once saved my life. Ah! when one has been in the predicament that I was in, face to face with the scaffold, one has good reason to remember the virtuous magistrate who has saved one's neck. A man would remember that, even if he were dead drunk!"

It was indeed the upright judge, inquiring for his nephew of the portress. When Anselme recognized his voice, he went down with a candle in his hand, to welcome and light him.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said the magistrate.

Gaudissart made a deep bow. Finot examined the judge with a tipsy eye, and made up his mind that he was rather a blockhead.

"There is no luxury here," said the judge gravely, looking about the room; "but, my boy, we must begin by being nothing, before we can be something great."

"What a profound remark!" said Gaudissart to Finot.

"Worthy of being the theme of an article," returned the journalist.

"Ah! is that you, sir?" said the judge, recognizing Gaudissart. "And how do you happen to be here?"

"Sir," replied Gaudissart, "I intend to do all within the modest limits of my power to contribute to the fortune of your dear nephew. We have just been considering the prospectus of his oil, which appears to us to be one of the finest specimens of this kind of literature. You see in this gentleman the author of the prospectus." The judge looked at Finot.

"The gentleman," continued Gaudissart, "is Monsieur Andoche Finot, a distinguished literary man."

Here Finot modestly pulled Gaudissart's coat-tails.

"Very good," said the judge, to whom these words explained the appearance of the table, and the remnants of the feast. "My boy," he continued, addressing Popinot, "get yourself ready, and we will go and spend the evening with Monsieur Birotteau, to whom I owe a visit. You will sign your partnership deed, which I have carefully examined. As you will have the manufactory for your oil in the neighborhood of the Temple, it seems to me that he ought to give you a lease of the shop; for he may have representatives, and things done properly give no room for discussion. It seems to me, Anselme, that these walls are very damp; you had better bring up some straw matting beside your bed."

"If you will allow me, sir," said Gaudissart, insinuatingly, "we have been pasting the paper ourselves, to-day, and it is not yet dry."

"Economy! good!" said the judge.

"See here!" said Gaudissart in a low

tone to Finot, "my friend is going, like a good boy, to spend the evening with his uncle; let us go and finish it together somewhere else."

The journalist, for answer, turned his empty pockets inside out. Popinot, seeing the action, slyly slipped twenty francs into the hand of the author of his prospectus. The judge had a carriage waiting for them at the end of the street, in which they were driven to Birotteau's. Pillerault, Monsieur and Madame Ragon, and Roguin were playing cards, and Césarine was embroidering a collar, when Judge Popinot and Anselme appeared. Roguin, who was seated opposite to Madame Ragon, near whom Césarine had placed herself, noticed the young girl's vivid blush of pleasure as Anselme entered, and by a sign drew his chief clerk's attention to her pomegranate-like cheeks.

"This is quite a day for deeds," said the perfumer, when, after the greetings had been exchanged, the judge told him the object of his visit.

César, Anselme and the judge went up to a room on the next floor, which was the temporary sleeping apartment of the perfumer, in order to discuss the lease and the deed of partnership drawn up by the magistrate. The lease was agreed upon for eighteen years, in order to correspond with that of the shop in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants; an apparently trivial circumstance, but one which proved to be of service to Birotteau later. When they returned to the other apartments, the magistrate, astonished at the general commotion, and at the presence of workmen on a Sunday, in the house of one so religious as the perfumer, asked the reason for it, and César, who had been expecting the question, was all ready with his answer.

"Although you are not worldly, sir," he said, "you will not disapprove of us for celebrating the liberation of the country. But that is not all. I intend to gather together a few of my friends, to celebrate my promotion to the order of the Legion of Honor."

"Ah!" said the judge, who had received no decoration.

"I may have been considered worthy of this honor," continued César, "because of having sat at the consular tribunal, and of having fought for the Bourbons on the steps—"

"Yes," said the judge.

—"Of Saint Roch, on the 13th Vendemiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon," finished César. "May I hope that you will be present?"

"I will come gladly," said the judge. "If my wife is well enough, I will bring her."

"Xandrot," said Roguin, "as they stood on the doorstep together, "give up all thoughts of marrying Césarine, and in six weeks you will see that I have given you good advice."

"Why?" asked Crottat.

"Because," replied Roguin, "Birotteau will spend a hundred thousand francs for his ball, and he is involving his fortune in this affair of the land, in spite of my advice. In six weeks these people will not have money enough to buy bread. Marry Mademoiselle Lourdois, the house-painter's daughter, instead; she has a dowry of three hundred thousand francs, and I can manage the affair for you."

XII.

THE splendors of the ball which César was about to give were reported with all sorts of variations and embellishments, both by the daily journals and by his interested neighbors and acquaintances, who were excited by the preparations which were being carried on by day and by night. It was affirmed that he had hired three houses; that he was having his salons gilded, and that the *ménu* for the refreshments was to comprise several dishes invented expressly for the occasion. It was said that the entertainment was designed expressly for members of the Government, and that no tradespeople were to be invited; and the perfumer was ridiculed for his ambition, his political pretensions were scoffed at, and his wound denied. Numberless were the maneuvers

among Birotteau's acquaintances to secure invitations, and he and his wife were fairly alarmed by the number of people who laid claim to their friendship.

This eagerness frightened Madame Birotteau, and she grew more and more grave as the eventful day approached. In the first place, she confessed to César that she did not know how to arrange the innumerable details of such an entertainment; where was she to find the silver, the glass, the refreshments, the table utensils and the servants? And who was to oversee everything? She begged Birotteau to station himself at the door, and to permit only invited guests to enter; for she had heard strange stories of people who claimed admittance at such times.

When, ten days beforehand, Braschon, Grindot, Lourdois and Chaffaroux, the contractors, had promised that the rooms should be ready for the famous Sunday of the 17th of December, there was an amusing conference held in the evening after dinner, in the modest little dining-room, between César, his wife and daughter, for the purpose of making a list of the invited guests, and preparing the invitations, which had that morning been sent home, printed upon rose-colored paper, in the latest style.

"Now, we must not forget anybody," said Birotteau.

"If we happened to forget a few, they would soon remind us," said Constance. "There is Madame Derville, with whom we have never exchanged calls, who was here to-day, as friendly as you please."

"She was very pretty," said Césarine. "I liked her."

"Before her marriage," remarked Constance, "she was only a seamstress in the Rue Montmartre; she has often made shirts for your father."

"Well, let us begin the list," said Birotteau, "with the people highest in rank. Write, Césarine; Monsieur le Duc and Madame la Duchesse de Lenoncourt—"

"Mercy! César," exclaimed Constance, "don't send any invitations to people with whom you are only acquainted in the way of trade. Are you going to invite the Princess de Blamont-Chauvry, a nearer relation to your god-mother, the Marquise d'Uxelles, than even the Duc de Lenoncourt? Would you ask the two Messieurs de Vaudenesse, Monsieur de Marsay, Monsieur de Rouquerolles, Monsieur d'Aiglemont, or any of the rest of your patrons? You must be crazy; your grandeur has turned your head."

"Very well," returned César; "but the Count de Fontaine and his family! eh? He came to my shop with the Marquis de Montauran and Monsieur de la Billardière, just before the great affair of the 13th Vendemiaire, and they were ready enough then to shake hands, and to call me 'dear Birotteau,' and to bid me exert myself for the good cause! We are old comrades."

"Put him down," said Constance. "If Monsieur de la Billardière and his son come, they must have some one to talk to."

"Write, Césarine," said Birotteau. "First, Monsieur the Prefect of the Seine; perhaps he will come and perhaps he will not, but he commands the municipal body: '*à tout seigneur tout honneur!*' Monsieur de la Billardière, mayor, and his son. Put the number of guests at the bottom. My colleague, Monsieur Granet, deputy, and his wife. She is ugly, but never mind; we can do without beauty. Monsieur Curel, the goldsmith, colonel of the National Guard, his wife and two daughters. So much for the authorities! Now for the great people. Monsieur the Count and Madame the Countess de Fontaine, and their daughter Mademoiselle Emilie de Fontaine."

"An impertinent thing who makes me leave the shop, to go and speak to her at the door of her carriage, no matter what the weather may be," said Madame César. "If she comes, it will only be to make fun of us."

"Perhaps that motive will bring her," said César, who was determined to have some people of rank. "Go on, Césarine. The Count and Countess de Granville, my landlord. Ah! now I think of it, Monsieur de la Billardière intends me to

receive the order of chevalier through the Count de Lacépède himself; and it is therefore perfectly proper for me to send an invitation for ball and dinner to the High Chancellor. Put down Monsieur Vauquelin for ball and dinner. And while I think of it, all the Chiffrevilles and the Protez. Monsieur and Madame Popinot, judge at the tribunal of the Seine. Monsieur and Madame Thirion, doorkeeper to the king's cabinet, friends of the Ragons, and their daughter, who, they say, is engaged to one of Monsieur Camusot's sons by his first marriage."

"César, do not forget little Horace Bianchon, Popinot's nephew and Anselme's cousin," said Constance.

"That's true!" replied César. "Monsieur and Madame Rabourdin, one of the chief officers in Monsieur de la Billardière's division. Monsieur Cochin, of the same ministry, his wife and son, the sleeping-partners of Matifat; and put down Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle Matifat, while we are about it."

"The Matifats," said Césarine, "have been trying to get invitations for Monsieur and Madame Colleville, Monsieur and Madame Thuillier, and the Saillards."

"We will see about it," said César. "Put down Monsieur and Madame Jules Desmarets."

"She will be the most beautiful one here," said Césarine. "I admire her more than anybody I ever saw."

"Derville and his wife," continued César.

"Do put down Monsieur and Madame Coquelin, the successors of Uncle Pillerault," said Constance. "They are so sure of being invited, that the poor little woman has had a superb ball-dress made: tulle, embroidered with chicory flowers, over white satin. She almost decided to have a dress embroidered with gold and silver, fit to go to court in. If we do not invite them, we shall make deadly enemies of them."

"Put them down, Césarine," said Birotteau; "we must pay due respect to commerce; we belong to it ourselves. Monsieur and Madame Roguin."

"Mamma," said Césarine, "Madame Roguin will wear all her diamonds, and her lace dress."

"Monsieur and Madame Lebas," proceeded César, "and the president of the tribunal of commerce, his wife and two daughters. I forgot them just now, among the officials. Monsieur and Madame Lourdois and their daughter; Monsieur Claparon, the banker, Monsieur du Tillet, Monsieur Grindot, Monsieur Molineux, Pillerault and his landlord, Monsieur and Madame Camusot, the rich silk merchant, with all their children: the one in the polytechnic school, and the lawyer—who, by the way, is about to be made a judge, on account of his marriage with Mademoiselle Thirion."

"But in the provinces," said Césarine.

"Monsieur Cardot," resumed César, "who is Camusot's father-in-law, and all the Cardot children. Stay! and the Guillaumes, in the Rue du Colombier, two old people who do upholstering. Alexander Crottat, Célestin—"

"Papa," interrupted Césarine, "do not forget Monsieur Andoche Finot and Monsieur Gaudissart, two young men who have been extremely useful to Monsieur Anselme."

"Gaudissart?" repeated César: "he was once under arrest. But never mind: he is going away in a few days, and is going to travel in behalf of our oil, so put him down. As for this Monsieur Andoche Finot, what is he to us?"

"Monsieur Anselme says," replied Césarine, "that he will be a great man some day, and that he is as witty as Voltaire."

"An author?" said Birotteau. "They are all atheists."

"Put him down, papa," entreated Césarine; "there are not enough dancing-men yet. Besides, that beautiful prospectus for your oil was written by him."

"Since he believes in my oil," said César, "put him down, dear child. Put also Monsieur Mitral, my bailiff, and Monsieur Haudry, our physician. We will ask him, for form's sake, but he will not come."

"He will come fast enough," said Césarine, sagely.

"I hope, César," said Madame Birot-

teau, "that you will ask the Abbe Loraux to dinner."

"I have already written to him," replied César.

"Oh! and do not forget Lebas's sister-in-law, Madame Augustine de Sommervieux," said Césarine.

"This is what it is to marry an artist," exclaimed the perfumer. "Look at your mother, fast asleep," he added in a low tone to his daughter. "There, there, good-night, Madame César."

Then, still in the same low tone, he asked, "And how about your mother's dress?"

"That will be ready, papa," replied the girl. "Mamma thinks she is only going to have a crêpe de Chine dress, like mine; the dressmaker is positive that she will not need to try it on."

"How many people?" asked César, aloud, as he saw his wife's eyes opening.

"A hundred and nine, with the clerks," replied Césarine.

"Where in the world are we going to put them all?" said Madame Birotteau; "but still," she added, naïvely, "after the Sunday there will be a Monday."

Nothing can be done simply, among people who are in the act of mounting from one social rank to another. No one, not even Madame Birotteau or César himself, could under any pretext enter the rooms on the first floor. César had promised to Raguet, his shop-boy, a new suit of clothes for the ball, if he would do his duty, and keep guard faithfully. Birotteau, like Napoleon at Compiègne, on the occasion of the restoration of the chateau for his marriage with Marie-Louise of Austria, did not want to see anything when it was partly done; he wished to enjoy the surprise of seeing its beauties all at once. And so it was to fall to the lot of Monsieur Grindot to take César by the hand and exhibit the rooms to him, as a cicerone would exhibit a picture-gallery to the curious. Each one in the house had invented a surprise for some one else. Césarine, dear child, had employed all her little treasure, a hundred louis, in buying books for her father. She had been one day informed by Monsieur Grindot that there would be two bookcases in her father's room, and she had immediately invested all her little savings in a collection of books to offer to her father: Bossuet, Racine, Voltaire, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Molière, Buffon, Fenelon, Delille, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, La Fontaine, Corneille, Pascal, La Harpe, and in short, all the usual stock of books which one finds everywhere, and which her father would never read. The bill for the binding would be something astonishing, without doubt. The celebrated but inaccurate book-binder Thouvenin had promised to deliver the volumes at noon on the 16th. Césarine had confided her trouble to her Uncle Pillerault, and he had undertaken to manage the bill. César's surprise to his wife was a dress of cherry velvet trimmed with lace, the same about which he had just spoken to his daughter, who was his accomplice. Madame Birotteau's surprise to the new chevalier was a pair of gold buckles and a solitaire diamond pin. And for the whole family there was the surprise of the newly-decorated rooms, followed by the still greater surprise of the bills to pay.

César gave deep thought to the consideration of the question as to which invitations should be delivered in person, and which carried by Raguet, in the evening. He finally took a carriage, installed his wife therein, dressed in her plumed hat and her last new shawl, the cashmere which she had been coveting for years; and the perfumers had the satisfaction of making twenty-two calls in one morning.

César had taken pity upon his wife, and had relieved her anxieties concerning the preparations necessary for such a magnificent entertainment, by entering into a diplomatic treaty with the illustrious Chevet, in which the latter agreed to furnish a superb service of silver plate, also the dinner, the wines, and the number of waiters and attendants suitable for the occasion, and to be answerable for their doings and manners. All he demanded was to be put in possession of the kitchen and dining-room, and to establish his headquarters there, and he

desired to keep possession of it through the evening, for he could not go away between the serving of a six o'clock dinner for twenty persons, and the magnificent entertainment at one o'clock in the morning. Birotteau made arrangements with the Café du Foy for the ices and fruits, and Tanrade was to furnish the refreshments.

"Now, do not be uneasy," said César to his wife, seeing how anxious she appeared to be, the night before the ball; "Chevet, Tanrade and the Café du Foy will take possession of the *entre-sol*, Virginie will take charge of the second floor, and the shop will be securely locked up. We will have nothing to do but to look out for the first floor."

On the 16th, at two o'clock, Monsieur de la Billardière called for César, to accompany him to the house of the chancellor of the Legion of Honor, where he, with a dozen others, was to be made a chevalier by Monsieur the Count de Lacépède. The mayor found the perfumer with tears in his eyes, for Constance had just presented him with the gold buckles and the solitaire.

"It is very sweet to be so loved," he said, as he entered the carriage in the presence of his assembled clerks, and of his wife and daughter. They all looked admiringly at César's black silk smallclothes, silk stockings, and new bluebottle coat, on which was destined to glow that ribbon which, according to Molineux, was dipped in blood. When he returned at dinner-time, he was pale with joy, and looked at his cross in every mirror, for in his first intoxication he was not contented with the mere ribbon, but was glorious without false modesty.

"My dear," he said, "Monsieur the Grand Chancellor is really a charming man; he has, at a word from La Billardière, accepted my invitation, and will come with Monsieur Vauquelin. Monsieur de Lacépède is a great man, as great as Monsieur Vauquelin; he has written forty books! And besides being an author, he is a peer of France. We must not forget to call him 'Your Highness,' or 'Monsieur le Comte.'"

"Why don't you eat something?" said his wife; and turning to Césarine she added:

"Your father is worse than a child."

"How well that looks at your buttonhole," said Césarine. "We will go out together, and they will present arms to you."

"They will present arms everywhere, where there are sentinels," replied César.

Just then Grindot descended with Braschon; and monsieur, madame and mademoiselle were informed that after dinner the rooms would be ready for their inspection; Braschon's boy was putting the finishing touches, and three men were lighting the candles.

"You need a hundred and twenty candles," said Braschon.

"There is a bill of two hundred francs from Trudon!" said Madame Birotteau, but her lamentations were arrested by a look from the Chevalier Birotteau.

"Your entertainment will be magnificent, Monsieur le Chevalier," said Braschon.

Birotteau thought to himself: "The flatterers have already begun. The Abbe Loraux warned me not to yield to their snares, and to remain modest. I will remember my origin."

César did not understand what it was that the rich upholsterer of the Rue Saint-Antoine wanted. Braschon made eleven attempts to get an invitation for himself, his wife, his daughter, his mother-in-law, and his aunt; and when they were all unsuccessful, he became Birotteau's mortal enemy. Upon the doorstep, he merely called him Monsieur Chevalier.

The general inspection began. César, with his wife and daughter, went out of the shop and entered the house from the street. The house door had been remodeled in grand style, divided in the middle, and made in equal, square panels, in the midst of which was an architectural ornament made of painted bronze. This kind of door, now so common in Paris, was then something entirely new. At the back of the vestibule was the staircase, divided into two straight branches,

between which was that socle which had given Birotteau so much anxiety, and which formed a sort of box where an old woman could be lodged. This vestibule, paved in black and white marble, was lighted by an antique lamp with four mouths or burners. The architect had united richness with simplicity. A narrow red carpet relieved the whiteness of the staircase, which was made of freestone, polished with pumice-stone. A first landing gave entrance to the *entresol.* The door leading to the apartments was like that in the street, except that it was made of carpenter's work.

"How beautiful!" said Césarine. "And yet there is nothing which particularly attracts notice."

"Precisely, mademoiselle," said Grindot. "The grace comes from the exact proportions between the pedestals, the plinths, the cornices and the ornaments; and besides, I have gilded nothing, so that the colors are somber and offer no brilliant points."

"It is a science," said Césarine.

Then they all entered an anteroom, in perfect taste, spacious, and simply decorated, with inlaid floor. Next came a salon, with three windows on the street, furnished in white and red, with elegantly delineated cornices and fine painting, where nothing was startling or dazzling. On a chimney-piece of white marble, with columns, were ornaments chosen with taste, which were beyond criticism and accorded with the other details. The rooms, in short, were arranged in that perfect harmony which artists alone know how to attain, by pursuing a system of decoration even to the minutest accessories. A chandelier with twenty-four candles made the draperies of the red silk glow, and the floor had an enticing appearance which made Césarine long to dance. A green and white boudoir led to César's study.

"I have put a bed there," said Grindot, opening the doors of an alcove cleverly concealed between the two bookcases, "in case either you or madame were ill, and would need another room."

"But this bookcase, filled with newly-bound books," exclaimed César. "Oh! my wife! my wife!"

"No," she replied, "that is Césarine's surprise."

"Pardon the emotion of a father," said César to the architect, as he embraced his daughter.

"Don't mention it, sir!" said Grindot; "you are in your own house."

In this study the coloring was brown, relieved by green, and the colors were so cleverly arranged that everything harmonized; thus, for instance, the color which served for the foundation of one article made the ornamentation of another, and *vice versa.* The engraving of Hero and Leander shone upon one of the panels of this room.

"You will have to answer for all this," said Birotteau, gayly.

"That beautiful engraving was given you by Monsieur Anselme," said Césarine.

For Anselme had also permitted himself a surprise for his master.

"Poor boy," said César, "he feels for me what I feel for Monsieur Vauquelin."

Madame Birotteau's chamber came next. The architect had given free rein to magnificence there, in order to please these worthy people, of the restoration of whose house he had made such a study. The chamber was of blue silk, with white ornaments, and the furniture of white cashmere with blue trimmings. Upon the white marble mantel-piece was a clock representing Venus reclining upon a beautiful block of marble; a pretty moquette carpet, of Turkish design, united this room with that of Césarine, which was furnished in Persian coloring, and very coquettishly, with a piano, a pretty wardrobe with glass doors, a little bed with simple curtains, and all the little trifles which young people like.

The dining-room was behind the chamber appropriated to César and his wife, and was entered by the staircase. It had been furnished after the style of Louis XIV., with a clock of *Boulle,* buffets of copper and tortoise-shell, and walls hung with draperies put on with gilded nails.

The delight of César and his family

cannot be described, especially when, upon returning to her own room, Madame Birotteau found upon her bed the dress of cherry velvet trimmed with lace, her husband's present, which Virginie had just brought in.

"Monsieur, these rooms are greatly to your credit," said Constance to Grindot. "There will be more than a hundred people here to-morrow evening, and you will be eulogized by everybody."

"I will recommend you," added César. "You will see some of the very best people among commercial circles, and you will be better known in a single evening than if you had built a hundred houses."

Constance, pleased and deeply touched, thought no longer either of the expense or of criticising her husband. In the morning, when Anselme had brought the picture of "Hero and Leander," he had told Constance that the success of the Huile Cephalique was assured, and that he was working for it with all his might. He had added, that in spite of the enormous expense which these improvements and the ball had entailed upon Birotteau, in six months the perfumer's share of the profits from the oil would more than cover it. After having been anxious and fearful for nineteen years, it was so sweet to give herself up to happiness for a single day, that Constance promised her daughter that she would not poison her husband's happiness by any forebodings, but would let him go his own way in peace.

When, therefore, Monsieur Grindot left them, about eleven o'clock, she threw herself upon her husband's neck, and with tears of joy said:

"Oh! César, you make me so happy!"

"Provided it lasts, you mean, don't you?" he replied, smiling.

"It will last; I have no longer any fear," said Madame Birotteau.

"That's right!" returned the perfumer. "At length you appreciate me."

People great enough to recognize their own weaknesses will confess that a poor orphan girl who, eighteen years before, had been head young lady at the Petit Matelot, Ile Saint-Louis, and a poor peasant boy who had come from Touraine to Paris on foot, with his stick in his hand, had reason to feel flattered and happy at being able to give such an entertainment, for such praiseworthy motives.

"I would give a hundred francs to have a caller come in now," said César.

And as he spoke the words, Virginie announced the Abbe Loraux.

The Abbe Loraux was then vicar of Saint-Sulpice. Never was the power of the soul more fully revealed than in this holy priest, intercourse with whom left the most profound impression upon the memory of all those who knew him. His crabbed face, ugly enough to repulse all confidence, had been made sublime by the exercise of catholic virtues; a heavenly splendor already shone there. An innate frankness gave an attractiveness to his disagreeable features, and the fires of charity purified the incorrect lines of his face, by a phenomenon exactly the opposite of that which, in Claparon's case, had brutalized and degraded everything. In his wrinkles were discernible the traces of the three beautiful virtues of humanity —Faith, Hope, and Charity. His speech was gentle, deliberate and impressive. His costume was that of the Parisian priests, but he allowed himself an overcoat of chestnut brown. No ambition had insinuated itself into this pure heart, which would one day be rendered up to its Maker in all its primitive innocence; and much persuasion had been necessary in order to induce the Abbe Loraux to accept even one of the most modest of the curacies of Paris. He looked now with an uneasy glance at all this magnificence, and smilingly shook his whitened head at the three delighted people before him.

"My children," he said, "it is not my place to be present at fetes, but rather to comfort the afflicted. I have come to thank Monsieur César, and to congratulate you. There is only one entertainment which will ever bring me to this house, and that is the marriage of this beautiful child."

After a quarter of an hour the abbe took his leave, and the perfumer and his

wife had not dared to exhibit the apartments to him. In fact, the grave apparition had had rather the effect of a dash of cold water upon César's enthusiasm.

When he had gone, they retired to rest, in the midst of their new luxury, taking possession of all the pretty furnishings which they had been desiring so long; and then they all went to sleep thinking of the delights in store for them on the following day.

XIII.

Césarine and her mother, after having duly attended mass, made themselves ready for the grand occasion about four o'clock, after having given up the *entresol* to the mercies of Chevet's people. Madame César had never had a more becoming toilet than this same dress of cherry velvet with the lace trimming; her beautiful arms, still fresh and young, her dazzlingly white neck, and her beautifully formed shoulders were finely relieved by the rich material and magnificent color. The naïve pleasure which every woman feels at knowing herself to be at her best, gave a kind of serenity to the Grecian profile of the perfumer's wife, whose beauty resembled that of a finely cut cameo.

Césarine was dressed in white crepe, with a wreath of white roses on her head, and a rose at her side; a scarf modestly concealed her shoulders, and her beauty nearly drove Popinot beside himself.

"These people are getting ahead of us," said Madame Roguin to her husband, as they passed through the rooms together.

The notary's wife was, in fact, furious with jealousy at not being as beautiful as Madame César, for every woman knows how to judge correctly the superiority or inferiority of a rival.

"Pshaw!" replied Roguin, in a low tone. "This is not going to last long, and you will soon be able to splash the poor woman with mud from your carriage when you meet her, ruined, going on foot along the street."

Vauquelin was perfectly gracious; he came with Monsieur de Lacépède, his colleague at the Institute, who had called for him in a carriage. When they saw their dazzlingly beautiful hostess, they immediately had recourse to scientific compliments.

"You must have, madame, a secret of which science is ignorant, to be able to remain so young and beautiful," said the chemist.

"You are rather at home there, sir," said Birotteau. "Yes," he continued, turning toward the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor, "I owe my fortune to Monsieur Vauquelin. Permit me to present to your highness the president of the tribunal of commerce; Monsieur the Count de Lacépède, a peer of France, and one of our great men. He has written forty volumes," he added to Joseph Lebas, who had accompanied the president of the tribunal.

The guests were punctual, and the dinner was like all trades-people's dinners, extremely gay, full of good-nature, and enlivened by coarse wit which never failed to excite mirth. The excellence of the food and of the wines was duly appreciated; and when the company repaired to the salon to take their coffee, it was half-past nine, and a few impatient guests had already made their appearance. An hour later, the room was full, and the ball fairly under way. Monsieur de Lacépède and Monsieur Vauquelin took their leave, to the great despair of Birotteau, who even followed them to the staircase in the vain endeavor to induce them to remain. He succeeded, however, in retaining Judge Popinot and Monsieur de la Billardière. With the exception of three ladies who represented aristocracy, finance, and the Government — namely, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, Madame Jules and Madame Rabourdin, whose dazzling beauty and high-bred appearance and manners were conspicuous among the assembly, most of the ladies presented, in their toilets and general appearance, something solid and heavy, with which the lightness and grace of these three ladies afforded an almost cruel contrast.

The class of people who were most fully represented at Birotteau's ball were of the kind who dress their children in the uniform of the National Guard, who delight in parade days, who go to their own country-house every Sunday, who ardently desire to achieve an air of distinction, and who have their own dreams of municipal honors; a *bourgeoisie* jealous of everything, and yet good, serviceable, devoted, sensible and compassionate, putting its name to a subscription for the children of General Foy, or for the Greeks, whose piracies are unknown to it, duped by its own virtues, and abused for its deficiencies by a society which is not worthy of it; which brings up its daughters to be honest and hard-working, if unintellectual; in short, a *bourgeoisie* admirably represented by the Matifats, druggists in the Rue des Lombards, whose establishment had supplied the "Reine des Roses" for sixty years.

Madame Matifat, who had wished to appear worthy of the occasion, was dancing in a turban and a heavy dress of scarlet embroidered with gold—a costume entirely in harmony with a proud manner, a Roman nose, and the splendor of a crimson complexion.

Monsieur Matifat, so superb at a review of the National Guard, where his conspicuous figure, with his shining gold chain and bunch of seals, could be easily discernible from afar, was completely under the rule of this Catherine II. of the counter. Fat and short, with spectacles and an abnormally high shirt-collar, he was remarkable for the depth of his voice and the wealth of his vocabulary. He never spoke of Corneille, simply; it was always "the sublime Corneille," while Racine was "the gentle Racine." He was accustomed to relate in a heavy manner vulgar anecdotes of Piron, who passes for a great man among this class of people. Matifat, prodigiously fond of actors, had a slight tendency to indecency in his talk, and Madame Matifat, whenever she saw that he was about to relate an anecdote, was accustomed to cry out in a piercing voice:

"My dear, be careful what you say!"

This voluminous queen of drugs was more than Mademoiselle de Fontaine's aristocratic gravity could withstand, and the well-bred young lady could not repress a smile as she overheard Madame Matifat say to her husband:

"Don't look at yourself in every mirror, my dear; that is bad manners."

It is a difficult thing to explain the difference between the aristocracy and the *bourgeoisie*. These women, encumbered with their fine toilets, and conscious of being dressed in their best, showed a naïve delight which proved that the ball was a rarity in their busy life; while the three who represented another sphere in life appeared now just as they would appear on the following day. They did not look as if they were dressed expressly for the occasion, and they were not continually contemplating themselves in their finery, nor anxious about the effect which they were producing; they seemed to think no more about themselves after they had put the finishing touches to their costumes before their mirrors at home; and they danced with the grace and unconsciousness which genius has given to some of the ancient statues.

The others, on the contrary, marked with the seal of labor, preserved their vulgar attitudes and enjoyed themselves too visibly; their looks were unguardedly curious, and their voices did not maintain that low-toned murmur so appropriate to ball-room conversation. And therefore Madame Rabourdin, Madame Jules, and Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who had promised themselves much entertainment at the perfumer's ball, were conspicuous among all the rest for their softened manners, and for the exquisite taste of their toilets; Madame Roguin, Constance and Césarine, seemed to be the connecting link between them and the other guests.

As usually happens at balls, there came a moment when the *crescendo* of animation, brilliancy and music broke into a *fortissimo* of tumult and enthusiasm, and Mademoiselle de Fontaine chose this time for taking leave; but at her first movement Birotteau, his wife and daugh-

ter hastened to protest against the desertion of all the aristocracy of their assembly.

"There is really in these rooms an atmosphere of good taste which surprises me," said the impertinent young lady to the perfumer; "allow me to congratulate you upon it."

Birotteau was so intoxicated by the public adulation which he had received, that he did not understand; but his wife blushed, and did not know what to reply.

"This is a national *fete* which does you great credit," said Camusot to him.

"I have rarely seen such a beautiful ball," remarked Monsieur de la Billardière, to whom an official lie cost nothing.

Birotteau accepted all these compliments *au sérieux*.

"What an enchanting sight! And such a fine orchestra! Will you not give balls very often?" asked Madame Lebas.

"What a charming apartment! Is it the result of your taste?" said Madame Desmarets.

And Birotteau was audacious enough to allow her to think that he had ordered and arranged it all.

Césarine, who was sure to be engaged for every dance, knew perfectly well that Anselme would hesitate to ask her to be his partner, on account of his lameness. As they left the table, he whispered to her:

"If I consulted only my own wishes, I should ask for the favor of a quadrille with you; but my happiness would not be worth the trial to your feelings."

Césarine, however, who had honestly come to the opinion by this time that men who had straight feet and legs were awkward and ungraceful in their walk, agreed to open the ball with Popinot; and he, emboldened by his aunt's encouragement, dared to talk of his love during the quadrille, although he did it in the indirect way usually employed by timid lovers.

"My fortune depends upon you," he said to her.

"How is that?" she asked.

"Because there is only one hope which can make me succeed," he replied.

"Hope then," she said, softly.

"Do you know what you have said?" asked Popinot, eagerly.

"Hope for fortune," returned Césarine, with a mischievous smile.

"Gaudissart! Gaudissart!" exclaimed Anselme, hastening to his friend when the dance was over, and pressing his arm convulsively, "you must succeed, or I shall blow my brains out. To succeed is to marry Césarine; she has just said so; and see how beautiful she is!"

"Yes, she is very prettily rigged," said Gaudissart; "and rich, besides. We will win her with the oil."

The good understanding between Mademoiselle Lourdois and Alexander Crottat, Roguin's destined successor, was remarked by Madame Birotteau, and it was not without a pang that she gave up the idea of seeing her daughter the wife of a Parisian notary.

Uncle Pillerault, after having exchanged a bow with Molineux, established himself in an armchair near the library; and from there he watched the players, listened to scraps of conversation, and occasionally moved to the doorway to watch the nodding plumes on the heads of the dancers, like the true philosopher that he was.

The men of the assembly were all uncouth, with the exception of Du Tillet, young La Billardière, Monsieur Jules Desmarets, and the official personages present. But among all the odd figures, there was none queerer than that of the petty tyrant Molineux, with his fine linen, which had grown yellow with age in the closet, with his jabot of hereditary lace, attached by a bluish cameo set in a pin, and with his short black silk smallclothes, which left exposed to view his thin little legs. César triumphantly exhibited to him the four rooms created by the architect on the first floor of the house.

"Well, that is your affair, sir," said Molineux. "My first floor, thus ornamented, will be worth more than a thousand *écus*."

Birotteau answered laughingly, but the accent with which the little old man pro-

nounced this phrase stabbed him as with a pin-prick.

"I will soon have possession of my first floor again; this man will soon be ruined." That is what the words "*will be worth,*" seemed to say, flung out as they were by Molineux like a blow from a claw.

The pale face and avaricious eye of the landlord struck Du Tillet, whose attention had been drawn to the man in the first place by a watch chain loaded with a pound or more of dangling, jingling charms, and by a mixed green and white coat with a collar oddly turned away, which made the old man resemble a serpent with little bells. The banker accordingly accosted the little usurer, with the idea of discovering the meaning of his odd expression.

"There, sir," said Molineux, putting one foot into the boudoir, "I am upon the property of the Count de Granville; but here," he added, indicating his other foot, "I am upon my own property; for I am the landlord of this house."

Molineux, always ready to talk when he could find a listener, and charmed with Du Tillet's flattering attention to his words, entered into a description of himself and his habits, and detailed the insolences of Gendrin, and his arrangements with the perfumer, without which this ball could not have taken place.

"Ah! has Monsieur César assigned his income to you?" said Du Tillet. "Nothing is farther from his usual habits."

"Yes, I required it," replied Molineux. "I am so good to my tenants!"

"If father Birotteau should happen to fail," thought Du Tillet, "this odd little man will make an excellent assignee, with his quarreling about trifles. He probably, like Domitian, amuses himself with killing flies when he is at home by himself."

Du Tillet then went to the gaming-table, where he had previously stationed Claparon, for he thought that under the protection of a game of cards the pretended banker would be free from examination and criticism. Their manner toward each other was so exactly that of strangers, that no one would have suspected them of being acquainted with each other; and Gaudissart, who recognized Claparon, dared not accost him when he received the cold, solemn look of one who does not desire to be addressed.

The ball, like a brilliant fusee, was extinguished at five o'clock in the morning. Toward that hour, of the hundred or more carriages that had filled the Rue Saint Honoré, only about forty remained. Du Tillet, Roguin, Cardot, the Count de Granville and Jules Desmarets had been playing at cards, and Du Tillet had won three thousand francs. When the light of day made the candles grow pale, the players joined in the last dance, which, now that the restraints of aristocracy were removed, and the last moments of enjoyments had come, grew fairly uproarious in its character, until César rubbed his hands with delight, and exclaimed:

"How they are enjoying themselves!"

"I hope they won't break anything," said Constance anxiously to her uncle.

"You have given the most magnificent ball that I have ever seen, and I have seen a great many," said Du Tillet, as he came to make his farewell bow to his former patron.

In one of Beethoven's symphonies there is a fantasy, like a great poem, which governs the *finale* of the symphony in C minor. When, after the slow introduction of the sublime magician, an enthusiastic gesture from the leader of the orchestra raises the rich curtain of the theme, and calls forth the dazzling brilliance toward which every musical tone has been converging, those poets whose hearts beat with emotion then, will understand how Birotteau's ball produced upon his life the effect which this *motif*, to which the symphony in C possibly owes its supremacy over its brilliant sisters, has upon their souls. A radiant fairy starts forth, raising its wand; and the rustling of silk can be heard, as angels raise the purple curtains. Doors of gold, sculptured like those of the Florentine's baptistry, slowly turn upon their diamond hinges. The eye loses itself among dazzling splendors; it sees a long line of

marvelous palaces among which beings of a superior order glide to and fro. The incense of prosperity burns, the altar of happiness flames, and perfumes float around. Beings divinely smiling, dressed in white and blue, pass lightly before the poet's eyes, showing faces of superhuman beauty, and forms of infinite delicacy. Cupids leap out with flaming torches. He feels himself loved, and is happy with a happiness which is breathed without being understood, while he floats upon the waves of that harmony which flows about him everywhere. After having lifted him to the heavens, the enchanter, by deep and mysterious transitions of the basses, plunges him again into the marshes of cold realities, from whence he is lifted up once more when his soul, thirsting for divine melodies, cries "Again!"

The psychical history of the most brilliant point of this beautiful finale is that of the emotions which this entertainment caused to Constance and to César. It was the *finale* of their commercial symphony.

XIV.

One week after the ball, which was like the last glowing spark of the prosperity of eighteen years, now about to be extinguished, César stood behind the windows of his shop, looking at the passers-by, and thinking heavily of his affairs. Until then, all had gone simply and regularly in his life; he had manufactured and sold, or else bought to sell again. But now the land speculation, together with his interest in the new firm of A. Popinot & Co., the payment of a hundred and sixty thousand francs, sixty thousand of which were for the expenses, direct and indirect, of the ball, and which would necessitate either the sacrifice of goods, which would displease his wife, or unheard-of success on the part of Popinot—all this multiplicity of ideas frightened the poor man, who felt that he held more threads in his hand than he could manage. How would Anselme govern his bark? Birotteau felt toward Popinot as a professor of rhetoric feels toward a pupil; he was afraid to let him alone, and regretted that he could not be always with him. Birotteau took good care not to let either his wife, his daughter or his clerks suspect it, but the truth was, he was like a simple bargeman of the Seine, to whom has been given, by chance, the command of a frigate.

These reflections were like a fog gathering around his intellect, which was never particularly adapted to meditation, and he stood there, trying to see his way clearly; when there appeared in the street a figure for which he had conceived a violent antipathy, and which was none other than that of his second landlord, Molineux. Everybody has had dreams which seem to comprise a whole lifetime, and in which a malign individual, a sort of evil destiny, seems to figure from time to time. Molineux seemed to César to play this part in his life. He had made a diabolical grimace in the midst of the fete, while looking at all the magnificence with an evil eye. Upon seeing him again, César remembered the former impression which the man had made upon him, all the more vividly that he experienced a fresh repulsion at seeing him intrude, as it were, into the midst of his reverie.

"Sir," said the little man in his exasperatingly soothing voice, "we have finished up things so slowly that you have forgotten to approve the writing on our little paper."

Birotteau took the lease to repair the omission. Just then the architect entered, bowed to the perfumer, and looked around him with a diplomatic air.

"Sir," he said at last, in a low tone to Birotteau, "you know how difficult it is to start a business; you were pleased with my work, and you would oblige me very much if you would pay me for it now."

Birotteau, who had no ready money left, instructed Célestin to make out a bill of two thousand francs at three months, and to prepare a receipt.

"I am very glad that you have taken

the responsibility of your neighbor's rent," said Molineux, with an air of sly cunning; "for I have just heard that the judge has set seals, because Monsieur Cayron has disappeared."

"I hope I shall not be pinched for five thousand francs," thought Birotteau.

"He had the reputation of doing a good business," said Lourdois, who had just come in to hand his bill to the perfumer.

"A merchant is never safe from reverses until he has given up business," remarked Molineux, folding his deed with careful precision.

The architect examined the little old man with the pleasure which an artist feels in viewing an able caricature.

"When one's head is beneath an umbrella, one generally feels that he is under cover, if it rains," he said.

Molineux studied the architect's mustache and whiskers much more than he did his face, and he despised Grindot fully as much as Grindot despised him; and he waited awhile, on the chance of being able to give him a scratch of his claw before he went away; for, by dint of living so constantly with his cats, Molineux had come to resemble the feline race both in manner and expression.

Just then Ragon and Pillerault entered.

"We have just been speaking to the judge about our affair," said Ragon, in a low tone to César, "and he thinks that in a speculation of this kind we will have to have a receipt from the sellers, and finish up the deeds, in order to be really individual proprietors."

"Ah! you mean the affair of the Madeleine," said Lourdois. "I have heard it spoken about; there will be some building to be done."

And the painter, who had made up his mind to insist upon the prompt payment of his bill, suddenly resolved not to hurry the perfumer.

"I brought in my bill because it was the end of the year," he said in a low tone to César; "but you can take your own time about paying it."

"What's the matter, César?" asked Pillerault, noticing that his nephew, at sight of the bill, stood as if stupefied, replying neither to Ragon nor Lourdois.

"Oh, only a trifle," replied the perfumer. "I have taken five thousand francs' worth of goods from my neighbor, the umbrella merchant, who has just failed; and if he had not given me good value for the money, I should be swallowed up, like a simpleton."

"I told you so long ago," exclaimed Ragon; "a drowning man would catch at his own father's leg to save himself, and they would both drown together. I have seen so many failures! A man is not exactly a knave at the beginning of misfortune, but necessity makes him one."

"That's true," said Pillerault.

"Ah! if I ever get to be a member of the Chamber of Deputies, or if I have any influence with the Government—" said Birotteau, rising up on tip-toe and falling back upon his heels.

"What would you do?" asked Lourdois; "for you are a wise man."

Molineux, who was interested in all discussions relating to law, was still in the shop; and as he and Lourdois were so attentive, Pillerault and Ragon, who already knew César's opinions, listened as gravely as the others.

"I would like," said the perfumer, "a tribunal of permanent judges, with a public administration for the purpose of judging the criminal. After an investigation, during which a judge would fulfill the actual functions of agents, assignees, and commissioner-judge, the merchant would be declared either capable of resuming business, or else bankrupt. If he was found capable of resuming business, he would be bound over to pay everything; he would be the guardian of his own property and of that of his wife; for his goods, his inheritances, and everything that he had, would belong to his creditors; he would manage everything for their interest, and under surveillance; and, in short, he would continue business, always signing himself: '*So and So*, bankrupt,' until he had repaid everything. But if he were declared bankrupt in the

beginning, he would be condemned, as formerly, to the pillory in the hall of the Bourse, to be exposed there for two hours, wearing the green bonnet. His goods and those of his wife would be given up to the creditors, and he would be banished from the kingdom."

"Commerce would be rather a surer thing in that case," said Lourdois, "and people would look twice before going into speculations."

"Why, the actual law is not followed," said César, exasperated. "Out of a hundred merchants there are more than fifty who are seventy-five per cent below their affairs, or who sell their goods at twenty-five per cent below the regular price, and who thus ruin commerce."

"He is right," said Molineux; "the actual law leaves too much latitude. There is no alternative between total abandonment and disgrace."

"Upon my word," said César, "a merchant, as things are going now, is no better than a licensed thief. With his signature, he can help himself out of everybody's money-box."

"You don't mince matters, Monsieur Birotteau," said Lourdois.

"He is right, though," said old Ragon.

"Every bankrupt is a suspected person," said César, who, to tell the truth, was exasperated by this little loss, which sounded in his ears as does the first cry of the hounds in those of a stag.

Just then Chevet's bill was brought in, followed by those from the Café de Foy and from the musicians, and one or two more.

"It is the 'quart d'heure' of Rabelais," said Ragon, smiling.

"Upon my word, you gave a most beautiful entertainment," said Lourdois.

"I am busy now," said César to the messengers, who left their bills and went away.

"Monsieur Grindot," said Lourdois, seeing the architect fold up a paper which Birotteau had signed, "you will please verify my bill; it is a mere matter of form, for every amount has already been agreed upon by you, in Monsieur Birotteau's name."

Pillerault looked at Lourdois and Grindot.

"If the prices have been agreed upon between architect and contractor," the uncle murmured in his nephew's ear, "you have certainly been robbed."

Grindot left the shop, and Molineux, following, accosted him mysteriously.

"Sir," he said, "you have listened to me, but you have not understood me; I wish you an umbrella."

Grindot took alarm at these words. The more illegal a profit is, the more a man clings to it; such is human nature. Grindot had taken a genuine artist's interest in his work, but had favored the contractors, at the expense of Birotteau, and to his own advantage. He guessed that the bills in which he had an interest would be paid by notes, as his own fees had been; and here was this little old man hinting that the architect had no protection from a rainy day; in other words, that the notes would be worthless. And if that should prove to be the case, Grindot made up his mind to be pitiless.

By the end of December, César had received bills to the amount of sixty thousand francs. Felix, the Café de Foy, Tanrade, and those little creditors who always expect ready money, had already presented their bills two or three times. In business, these trifling claims often do more injury than a positive misfortune, for they announce trouble. Known losses are definite, but a panic knows no bounds.

Birotteau saw himself left without any ready money, and he was seized with fear, for such a thing had not happened to him before in all the course of his business life. He ordered Celestin to present bills to his customers. His clients—for such was the high-sounding name then given by retailers to their customers, and which César employed in spite of his wife, who finally told him: "Call them what you like, as long as they pay you!"—his clients, then, were rich people who always paid their accounts, but took their own time about it, and who often were in debt to the perfumer to the extent of fifty or sixty thousand francs. The second clerk took down the book, and

began copying out the largest of these bills. César dreaded his wife's comments, and in order not to let her see the state into which this whirlwind of misfortune had thrown him, he prepared to go out.

"Good-day, sir," said Grindot, coming in with the careless air which artists affect when speaking of matters to which they pretend to be absolute strangers; "I find that I cannot raise any money on your paper, and so I shall have to ask you to give me cash in its place. I am extremely sorry to trouble you, but you see I did not want to speak to the usurers, or to peddle your signature about, for I know enough of business to understand that such a thing would be very injurious to your credit; therefore, it will be for your interest to—"

But Birotteau interrupted him. "Sir," he said, "be good enough not too speak so loud, if you please. I am very much surprised at what you tell me."

Just then Lourdois entered.

"Lourdois," said the perfumer, smiling, "would you believe it?—"

But he stopped suddenly. He had been about to ask Lourdois to take Grindot's note, with some joking remark about the architect's lack of faith in a merchant whose credit was so perfectly assured; but he perceived a cloud on Lourdois's brow, which made him tremble at his contemplated imprudence. This innocent raillery would be the death of a suspected credit. In a case like this, a rich merchant redeems his note and does not offer it to others. Birotteau felt himself grow giddy, as if he were gazing over a precipice.

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," said Lourdois, beckoning him to the back of the shop, "my bill has been verified and approved, and I must beg you to have the money ready for me to-morrow. My daughter is going to marry Crottat, and I must have the ready money."

"Come the day after to-morrow," said Birotteau proudly, relying surely upon the bills which he was about to present. "And you too, sir," he added to the architect.

"And why not pay now?" asked the latter.

"I must pay my workmen at the faubourg," replied César, who had never told a lie.

He took his hat to go out with them. But the mason, Thorein, and Chaffaroux stopped him just as he shut the door.

"Sir," said Chaffaroux to him, "we want some money."

"I have not the mines of Peru," answered César shortly, and he walked quickly away from them.

"There is something beneath all this," he thought. "That cursed ball has made every one think I am worth millions. But Lourdois's manner was not quite natural; there is something more than appears on the surface."

He walked aimlessly along the Rue Saint Honoré, and at the corner of a street ran blindly against Alexander Crottat.

"Ah! sir," said the future notary, "may I ask you one question? Has Roguin given your four hundred thousand francs to Monsieur Claparon?"

"You were present when the business was done," replied César. "Monsieur Claparon did not give me any receipt—my values were to be negotiated—Roguin must have remitted to him my two hundred and forty thousand francs — They said that the deeds of the sale would be positively accomplished — Judge Popinot thinks — The receipt—But—why do you ask?"

"Why do I ask?" repeated Crottat. "To know whether Roguin has your two hundred and forty thousand francs. I did not know but he had sent them to Monsieur Claparon; but of course he has used them, together with a hundred thousand francs of mine, which I gave to Claparon without any receipt, just as confidingly as I would hand my purse to you. The people who are selling the land have not received a sou of the money; they have just left my house. The borrowed money on your lands does not exist, for Roguin has used it up, just as he long ago devoured your hundred thousand francs. Your last hundred thousand francs are

taken, for I remember drawing them from the bank myself."

The pupils of César's eyes were dilated to such an extent that he could see nothing but a red flame.

"Your hundred thousand francs at the bank, my hundred thousand francs to his charge, and the hundred thousand francs to Monsieur Claparon — there are three hundred thousand francs vanished into smoke, to say nothing of further thefts which may be discovered," resumed the young notary. "Monsieur du Tillet is well out of it; Roguin has been at him for the last month to get him to join in this land speculation, but luckily all his money was invested in some affair with the house of Nucingen. You see, Roguin has been intriguing with his clients' funds for the last five years. And I thought I had such a good thing on hand! I have no receipt, and the creditors will think that I am his accomplice if I speak of my hundred thousand francs, and a man just starting in life must look out for his reputation. You will scarcely get thirty per cent. It is only twenty days ago that he advised me not to marry Césarine, saying that you would be a beggar, the monster!"

Alexander might have gone on talking for a long time, but Birotteau stood as if turned to stone. The phrases were like so many blows of a club to him. He seemed to hear only funeral bells, and to see the fires of a great conflagration. Crottat, who had always found the worthy perfumer strong and capable, was frightened by his pallor and immobility. Roguin's successor did not know that the notary had made way with more fortunes than that of César. The idea of suicide even passed through César's mind. Suicide being a means of fleeing from a thousand deaths, it seemed logical to choose only one. Crottat gave his arm to César, but it was impossible to make him walk; his legs gave way beneath him like those of a drunken man.

"What's the matter with you?" said Crottat. "My good sir, courage! This is not a killing matter. Besides, you will recover forty thousand francs, for your lender did not have this sum; it has not been delivered to you, and there is a chance to plead the annulment of the contract."

But César only moaned: "My ball, my cross, two hundred thousand francs of bills on the place, and no money. The Ragons, and Pillerault— And my wife saw it all clearly beforehand!"

A rain of confused words which revealed the overwhelming masses of thought and the terrible sufferings of the perfumer, and which fell like hail, cutting down all the flowers in the garden of the "Reine des Roses."

"I wish somebody would cut off my head," said Birotteau at last; "it is too heavy for me, and it is of no use."

"Poor papa Birotteau!" said Alexander. "Are you then in danger?"

"Danger!" echoed César.

"Well, have courage; fight against it," said the other.

"Fight!" repeated the perfumer again.

"Du Tillet has been your clerk," resumed Crottat; "he has a good head, and he will help you."

"Du Tillet?"

"Yes; come!"

"I would not go home as I am, for anything," said Birotteau. "You who are my friend, if there are any friends, you in whom I have been interested, and who have dined with me, in the name of my wife, Xandrot, call a hackney-coach and come with me!"

The notary, thus adjured, succeeded with difficulty in depositing in the vehicle the inert mass which bore the name of César.

"Xandrot," said the perfumer, in a voice choked with the tears which had at last come to the relief of his overcharged brain, "let us go to my house; speak to Celestin for me; tell him that he has my life and that of my wife in his hands, that no one, under any pretext whatever, must chatter about Roguin's disappearance. Call Césarine down, and tell her not to let any one speak to her mother about the affair. We must suspect our best friends, Pillerault, the Ragons, everybody."

Crottat noticed the change in Birotteau's voice, and understood the importance of his counsel. The Rue Saint Honore was on the road to the magistrate's house, and he carried out the wishes of the perfumer, whom Césarine and Celestin viewed with frightened eyes as he lay back pale and stupefied in the carriage.

"Keep the affair a secret," was all he said.

"Ah!" thought Xandrot, "he is coming to himself; I thought he was lost."

The conference between Alexander Crottat and the magistrate lasted a long time; they sent for the president of the chamber of notaries, and carried César about from place to place like a package; he neither moved nor spoke. About seven o'clock in the evening, Crottat took him home, and the idea of meeting Constance gave him a little strength. The young notary had the forethought to precede him, and to warn Constance that her husband had had some kind of a stroke.

"There seems to be something the matter with his brain," he said to her, touching his forehead with his finger; "he may have to be bled."

"This is no more than I expected," said Constance, without the slightest suspicion of the truth. "He did not take medicine at the beginning of the winter, as he usually does, and for the last two months he has been working like a galley-slave, as if he had not already made his fortune."

César's wife and daughter begged him to go to bed, while they sent for old Dr. Haudry, his physician. He came, examined into César's symptoms, and ordered mustard plasters to be applied to the soles of his feet; for he feared cerebral congestion.

"What can have caused this?" asked Constance.

"The damp weather," replied the doctor, to whom Césarine had just given a hint.

Physicians are often obliged to utter learned nonsense, out of consideration for the watchers around a sick-bed, and the old doctor had had experience enough to understand with half a word.

Césarine followed him to the staircase to ask for directions.

"Keep him perfectly quiet for the present," he replied. "We will try strengthening medicines when his head is better."

XV.

Madame César passed two days by the bedside of her husband, who often seemed to her to be delirious. Lying there in his wife's beautiful blue room, and looking at the draperies, the furniture and the expensive luxuries, he said things which were perfectly incomprehensible to Constance.

"He is crazy," she said to Césarine, as César, sitting upright in bed, began reciting, by snatches, in a solemn voice, the articles of the Code of commerce.

"If the expenses shall be judged excessive," he said; and then, suddenly, "Take away the draperies!"

After two or three terrible days, during which César's reason was in danger, his strong peasant nature triumphed; his head became clear. Dr. Haudry gave him cordials and nourishing food, and the merchant was once more on his feet. Then Constance, wornout with fatigue, took her husband's place.

"My poor wife," said César, as he stood looking at her while she slept.

"Come, papa, courage! You are such a superior man that you will triumph. This will be nothing. Monsieur Anselme will help you."

Césarine, in a gentle voice, ventured to say these vague words, which were yet more softened by that tenderness which gives courage to the most dejected, as a mother's singing soothes an ailing child.

"Yes, my dear," replied her father, "I will do my best to struggle against it; but not a word to any one—not even to Popinot, who loves us, or to your Uncle Pillerault. In the first place, I am going to write to my brother; he is, I believe, canon and vicar of a cathedral. He

spends almost nothing, and must have plenty of money. Supposing him to have saved a thousand *écus* a year, he ought by this time to have a hundred thousand francs laid by. Priests can get rich in the provinces."

Césarine hastened to bring to her father a little table provided with writing materials, and with it she brought what were left of the rose-colored invitations to the ball.

"Take those away and burn them," exclaimed the merchant. "The devil alone could have inspired me to give that ball. If I have to give in, I shall look like a knave. Here, let us have no unnecessary phrases;" and he began to write:

"My dear Brother—I find myself involved in such a critical business crisis that I beg of you to send me all the money which you can command, even if you have to borrow some.

"Yours, César."

"P.S.—Your niece Césarine, who is with me as I write, while my poor wife sleeps, sends kindest remembrances to you."

This postscript was added at Césarine's request, and then she took the letter down to Raguet.

"Papa," said she, coming up again, "here is Monsieur Lebas, who would like to speak to you."

"Monsieur Lebas! a judge!" exclaimed César, as much alarmed as if misfortune had made him a criminal.

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," said the fat merchant-clothier, "I take too much interest in you, we have known each other too long, and have been too closely associated as judges, for me not to feel desirous of telling you that a man named Bidault, called Gigonnet, a usurer, has had some of your bills passed to his order, *without security*, from Claparon. These two words are not only an insult, but they are the death-blow to your credit."

"Monsieur Claparon desires to speak to you," said Celestin, appearing at that moment. "Shall I show him up?"

"Now we shall know the cause of this insult," said Lebas.

"Monsieur Claparon," said the perfumer, as the banker entered, "allow me to present to you Monsieur Lebas, judge of the tribunal of commerce, and my friend."

"Ah! so this is Monsieur Lebas," said Claparon. "Delighted to meet you, sir. Monsieur Lebas of the tribunal; yes, exactly."

"He has seen," continued Birotteau, interrupting the trifling stream of words, "the bills which I remitted to you, and which you declared should not be put in circulation. He has seen them marked with these words: '*without security*.'"

"Well," replied Claparon, "they are not in circulation; they are in the possession of a man with whom I do a great deal of business, a Monsieur Bidault. That is why I made them without security. If the bills were to have been in circulation, you would have made them payable directly to his order. This gentleman will understand my situation. What do these bills represent? the price of some real estate; payable by whom? by Birotteau. Now, why should I give the security of my signature to Birotteau? I have an inflexible business rule; I do not any more give my guarantee uselessly, than I give a receipt for a sum which I have not received. I always take it for granted that whoever signs will have to pay; and I do not wish to be exposed to the chance of having to pay three times."

"Three times!" repeated César.

"Yes, sir," resumed Claparon. "I have already guaranteed Birotteau to the people who are selling to us; why should I answer for him to the banker also? We are placed in hard circumstances. Roguin goes away with a hundred thousand francs from me. Therefore, my half of the land costs me five hundred thousand francs in place of four hundred thousand. Roguin takes two hundred and forty thousand francs belonging to Birotteau. Now what would you do in my place, Monsieur Lebas? Just put yourself in my place. You do not know me, any more than I know Monsieur Birotteau. Now listen. Suppose we do business together on shares. You furnish

money, and I bring securities amounting to my part of the funds. I offer them to you, and you very kindly undertake to convert them into money. Later, you learn that the rich and respected banker, Claparon, has failed for six millions; now would you go at that very moment and put your signature as security for mine? You would be a fool if you did! Well, Monsieur Lebas, Birotteau is in the situation that I have just imagined Claparon to be in. Don't you see that if I indorse his bills I shall be held responsible to the purchasers for his share as well as my own, and without having—"

"To whom?" demanded the perfumer, interrupting him.

"And without having his half of the land," continued Claparon, without noticing the interruption, "for I should have no right to it; I should have to buy it again! And so I would have to pay three times."

"Responsible to whom?" repeated Birotteau again.

"To the third party," replied Claparon, "if I should indorse, and if you should meet with misfortune."

"I shall not fail, sir," said Birotteau.

"Good!" said Claparon. "But as you have been a judge, and are a clever man of business, you know that a man has to look on all sides of a thing, and you will understand that I am only attending to my own safety."

"Monsieur Claparon is right," said Joseph Lebas.

"I am right," returned Claparon; "right, from a business point of view. But this is an affair of real estate. Now, what ought I to receive? Money! for money must be given to the people of whom we are buying. Setting on one side the two hundred and forty thousand francs, which I am sure Monsieur Birotteau will be able to raise"—with a look at Lébas—"I came to ask of you the mere trifle of twenty-five thousand francs," he said, addressing the perfumer.

"Twenty-five thousand francs!" exclaimed César, feeling as if the blood were turning to ice in his veins. "Under what pretext, sir?"

"My dear sir," replied Claparon, "we are obliged to accomplish sales before a notary. Now, as far as the relative price is concerned we understand it well enough among ourselves, but with the treasury it is another thing. We must have ready money; we must have forty-four thousand francs this week. I was very far from expecting reproaches when I came here, for, thinking that perhaps these twenty-five thousand francs might trouble you, I was able to tell you that by great good luck I had saved you from—"

"What?" said Birotteau, with an accent of distress which no one could mistake.

"Misfortune!" replied the other. "I have credited to you the twenty-five thousand francs' worth of miscellaneous bills which Roguin had sent to me to negotiate, upon the registration and expense of which I will send you an account; there is the little negotiation to deduct, for which you will owe me six or seven thousand francs."

"All this seems perfectly fair to me," said Lebas. "I should have behaved precisely the same toward an unknown man if I had been in the place of this gentleman, who seems to have an excellent knowledge of his business."

"Monsieur Birotteau will not die of this," said Claparon. "It takes more than one blow to kill an old wolf; I have seen wolves run, with balls in their heads —and run like wolves, too!"

"Who can foresee knavery like that of Roguin?" said Lebas, as much alarmed at César's silence as at the enormous speculation so foreign to the perfumery business.

"It is only by the merest chance that I did not give a receipt for four hundred thousand francs to Monsieur Birotteau," said Claparon, "and then I should have been in a pretty fix. I remitted a hundred thousand francs to Roguin last night. Our mutual confidence has saved me. Whether the funds were at the office, or at my house until the day of the final contracts, seemed a matter of indifference to all of us."

"It would have been better if each one

had kept his money in the bank until it was time to pay it," said Lebas.

"Roguin was my bank," remarked César. "But he is in the speculation, too," he added, looking at Claparon.

"Yes, for a quarter, by word of mouth," replied Claparon. "There would be only one thing more foolish than letting him carry off my money, and that would be to allow him to have a share in the speculation. If he should send me my hundred thousand francs, and two hundred thousand more for his own part, why, we should see! But he will take good care not to get mixed up in a thing which will not yield profits for five years. If, as they say, he has only carried of three hundred thousand francs, he will need fifteen thousand pounds of income to live comfortably in a foreign land."

"The bandit!" exclaimed César.

"Well," said Claparon, "if we are outwitted, is it not our own fault? Why were we not suspicious of a notary who engaged in speculation? Every notary, every exchange agent, and every broker who speculates is an object of suspicion. Failure is for them fraudulent bankruptcy. Well, we are just weak enough not to outlaw people with whom we expect to dine, or who has given us beautiful balls. No one complains. But it is wrong."

"It is very wrong," said Birotteau. "The law relating to failures ought to be remodeled."

"If you need me," said Lebas to Birotteau, "I am entirely at your service."

"Monsieur Birotteau does not need any one," said the indefatigable talker who had been well-instructed by Du Tillet. "His affair is simple enough; Roguin's failure will give a dividend of fifty per cent, Crottat tells me. Besides this dividend, Monsieur Birotteau will recover forty thousand francs, and he can borrow on his property. Now it is four months before we shall have to pay two hundred thousand francs to the people who are selling. Between now and then, Monsieur Birotteau will be able to redeem his notes, for he ought not to count upon getting back what Roguin has carried off. But even supposing Monsieur Birotteau is a little hard-pressed—well, with a few notes in circulation he will pull through all right."

The perfumer took fresh courage as he heard Claparon thus analyze the affair, and trace out for him his line of conduct. His expression became firm and decided, and he conceived a profound respect for the banker's business talents.

Du Tillet had judged it best to make Claparon believe him to be one of Roguin's victims; he had sent a hundred thousand francs to Claparon to be given to Roguin, who had immediately given them back to Du Tillet; but of this last transaction Claparon was ignorant, Du Tillet not daring to confide his plans to him in all their extent.

"If our first friend is not our first dupe we should not find a second," he said to Claparon on the day when, being reproached by his commercial go-between, he cast him off like a worn-out tool.

Monsieur Lebas and Claparon went away together.

"I can get out of it yet," thought Birotteau. "My debts, in bills to be met, amount to two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs; seventy-five thousand francs for my house, and a hundred and seventy-five thousand francs for the land. Now, to meet these payments, I have the Roguin dividend, which will perhaps be a hundred thousand francs, and I can annul the mortgage on the land, which will make a hundred and forty in all. And so it is only a question of making a hundred thousand francs out of the Huile Cephalique, and of waiting, by the help of a few notes, or of credit with some banker, for the moment when the land will be at its highest value, and I can redeem all my losses."

When an unfortunate man can once weave for himself a romance of hope, by a process of reasoning more or less correct, he is often saved. Many people have mistaken for energy the confidence which illusion gives. Perhaps hope is half of courage; indeed, the Catholic religion makes a virtue of it. Has not hope

sustained many feeble ones, giving them time to wait for the chances of life?

Resolved to appeal to his wife's uncle before seeking help elsewhere, Birotteau had not gone along the Rue Saint Honore as far as the Rue des Bourdonnais, when he felt his heart sick and faint within him; but necessity, that hard cavalier, spurred him on, and he reached the door of the hardware merchant at length, with much the same feelings that a child experiences upon entering a dentist's rooms. He mounted slowly, and found the old man sitting by the fire, reading the "Constitutionnel," before the little round table which held his fugal breakfast; a small loaf, some butter, cheese and a cup of coffee.

"Here is a true philosopher," said Birotteau, with a pang of envy at his uncle's mode of life.

"Well," said Pillerault, taking off his spectacles, "I heard all about Roguin last night at the Cafe David. I hope that you took our advice, and obtained a receipt from Claparon?"

"Alas! uncle," groaned César, "you have put your finger on the wound itself. No, I did not."

"Ah! unfortunate boy, you are ruined!" said Pillerault, letting fall his journal, which Birotteau, in spite of its being the "Constitutionnel," picked up.

Pillerault was so lost in his reflections that he remained motionless, as if molded in bronze, staring blindly through his windows at the opposite wall, and listening to Birotteau's lengthy discourse. Evidently he was hearing and judging, and weighing the *pros* and *cons* with the inflexibility of a Minos who had passed the Styx of commerce and left the quay of Morfundus to return to his modest little third-floor apartments.

"Well, uncle?' urged Birotteau at last, after waiting for a reply to the entreaty to sell sixty thousand francs' worth of income, with which he had concluded.

"Ah! my poor nephew, I cannot do it," replied the old man. "You are too deeply compromised. The Ragons and I will each have to lose our fifty thousand francs. It was by my advice that these good people sold their shares in the Wortschin mines, and I feel obliged, in case of loss, not indeed to return their capital to them, but to do all I can to help them, as well as to help my niece and Cesarine. Perhaps you will all be needing bread before long, and you will find it here—"

"Bread, uncle?" exclaimed César.

"Yes, bread," repeated the old man. "Look at things as they are. *You will not get out of this.* Out of five thousand six hundred francs of income, I can spare four thousand francs to share them between the Ragons and you. When your misfortune comes, I know Constance well enough to feel sure that she will work with all her might, and will deny herself everything; and you will do the same, César."

"All is not yet hopeless, uncle," said the perfumer.

"I do not agree with you," replied Pillerault.

"I will prove it to you," added César; to which the old man replied that nothing would give him greater pleasure.

Birotteau went away without saying anything more. He had come seeking consolation and courage, and had received a second blow; less severe, in truth, than the first, but instead of coming upon his head, it had struck at his heart; and César's heart was his whole life. He came back again after having descended several steps.

"Sir," he said, coldly, "Constance knows nothing of all this; I beg of you to keep the secret, at least, and to ask the Ragons not to take away from me the peace of which I have so much need in order to struggle against misfortune."

Pillerault made a gesture of consent.

"Courage, César," he added; "I see that you are angry with me now, but a little later, when you think of your wife and child, you will do me justice."

Discouraged by his uncle's opinion, César fell from the heights of hope to the miry marshes of uncertainty once more. When, in these commercial crises, a man has not a mind as well regulated as that

of Pillerault, he becomes merely the sport of events; he follows the ideas of others, for his own are as erratic as will-o'-the-wisps. He becomes the prey of the whirlwind, instead of quietly lying down while it passes, or going in some other direction in order to escape it.

In the midst of his wretchedness, Birotteau remembered the lawsuit relative to the money which he had attempted to borrow. He went to Derville, his lawyer, in order to begin proceedings as soon as possible, provided the lawyer saw some chance of getting the contract annuled. He found him wrapped in his white dressing-gown, seated by his fire, calm and self-possessed, like all lawyers who are inured to momentous confidences. Birotteau noticed for the first time this coolness so indispensable to a lawyer, but which strikes like ice upon the passionate, eager client who comes bringing his life and honor, and that of his wife and children, in his hand. He related his case, and waited for the lawyer's decision.

"If it is proven," said Derville, at length, "that the sum which had been lent was no longer at Roguin's, as there has been no delivery of money, there is a chance of annulment; the lender will have to resort to the security, as you will have to for your hundred thousand francs. There is a good prospect of success, although no one can answer for a lawsuit beforehand."

The opinion of such an eminent lawyer gave César a little courage, and he begged Derville to obtain judgment in a fortnight. To which the latter replied that he might possibly be able in three months to get a judgment annuling the contract.

"Three months!" echoed the disappointed perfumer, who had believed he had found a way out of his difficulties.

"Do it as quickly as we can, it will be impossible to make your opponent move rapidly," said Derville, smiling. "He will take advantage of every delay; the lawyers may not always be there; who knows but what he may even allow the action to go by default? We cannot take our own pace, my dear sir."

"But at the tribunal of commerce," said Birotteau.

"Oh! that is another matter," said the lawyer. "You judges do dispatch things in a hurry, while we at the palace have certain forms. Form is the protection of right. Would you like an immediate judgment which would cause you to lose your forty thousand francs? Very well! your adversary, who sees himself in danger of losing this sum, will defend himself as long as he can. Delays are the breastworks of the law."

"You are perfectly right," said Birotteau, bowing and going away with a mortal chill at his heart.

"They are right, all of them. Money! money!" cried the perfumer aloud as he went through the busy, noisy Parisian streets. When he entered his shop, the clerk, who had been sent everywhere with the invoice-bills, came to him and informed him that, on account of the New Year being close at hand, each one had kept the bill without paying it.

"There is no money anywhere," said the perfumer despairingly, aloud in the shop.

And then he bit his lips, for all the clerks had raised their heads at the words.

XVI.

FIVE days passed thus; five days during which Braschon, Lourdois, Thorein, Grindot, Chaffaroux, and a host of lesser creditors were passing through the various chameleon phases which a creditor takes before arriving at the peaceable state attained by assuming the bloody colors of the commercial Bellone. In Paris, the period of suspicion is as rapid in its approach as the movement of confidence is slow to appear. Once given up to commercial fears, creditors pass from an affected politeness to the red of impatience, to the somber crackling of importunities, to bursts of disappointment, to the cold blue of determination, and finally to the black insolence of a prepared assignment.

Braschon, the rich upholsterer of the

Faubourg Saint Antoine, who had not been invited to the ball, sounded the charge, in the character of a creditor wounded in his self-love; he demanded to be paid within twenty-four hours; he exacted security, not by a deposit of furniture, but by a second mortgage upon the land in the faubourg. In spite of the violence of their reproaches, however, the creditors still left some intervals of repose to Birotteau, during which he breathed freely once more.

Instead of conquering these first attacks upon a difficult position by strong resolution, César employed all his intelligence in preventing his wife, the only person who could have advised him, from knowing anything about it. He stood sentinel at the threshold of his door, and in his shop. He had intrusted Celestin with the secret of his temporary embarrassment, and Celestin examined his master with curious and astonished eyes, recognizing that his power was already diminishing. Without having the necessary energetic capacity for defending himself upon so many points, all threatened at once, César had yet the courage to look his position fairly in the face. For the end of the month of December, and for the 15th of January, he would need, for his household, his rents, and his various running expenses, the sum of sixty thousand francs, thirty thousand of which were due upon the 30th of December; and every available resource would barely yield him twenty thousand, thus leaving a deficit of ten thousand. To him, this situation did not appear desperate, for he looked no farther than the present moment, like those adventurers who only live from day to day. Before the report of his embarrassment should become generally known, therefore, he resolved upon what to him was a grand "coup," namely, to apply to the famous François Keller, banker, orator and philanthropist, celebrated for his benevolence and for his desire of being useful to the business interests of Paris. The banker, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, was liberal, and Birotteau was a royalist; but the perfumer, judging the other by himself, found in this only one reason the more for obtaining credit. If actual money value should be necessary, he did not doubt Popinot's devotion, and counted upon him for enough to aid him in winning his lawsuit, by paying in the meantime the most importunate of his creditors.

The communicative perfumer, who had always been in the habit of confiding every thought and emotion to his wife, and obtaining help and courage from her, could not talk of his present situation either with his head clerk, his uncle, or Constance; and therefore he was doubly weighed down by his cares. But, like the generous martyr that he was, he preferred to suffer by himself rather than to let the blow fall upon his wife; he wanted to be able to tell her about the danger after it should be over. Perhaps, indeed, he shrank from imparting such knowledge to her. The fear with which she inspired him gave him courage. He went every morning to the church of Saint Roch to hear low mass, and made a confidant of the Lord alone.

"If," he said to himself, "when I return home from church, I do not find any officer there, my demand will succeed; that will be God's answer to my prayer."

And he was made happy by finding no officer there. However, his heart was too full not to demand some outlet. Césarine, to whom he had already confided the fatal news, was in possession of his secret, and many were the glances of intelligence and of secret despair which were exchanged between them. Birotteau was always jovial and gay before his wife; did Constance ask a question, bah! everything was going beautifully; Popinot, to whom César scarcely gave a thought, was sure to succeed, and the oil was making its way famously; Claparon's notes would be paid, and there was nothing to fear. This affected gayety was frightful. When his wife had fallen asleep at night, Birotteau would sit up in the sumptuous bed and give himself up to the contemplation of his wretchedness; and Césarine would come stealing in, with her little feet bare, and a shawl thrown around her, and would say, sobbing herself:

"Papa, I heard you; you are weeping."

Birotteau was in such a state of apathy after having written the letter asking for an interview with the great Francois Keller, that Césarine dared not let him go out alone, and always accompanied him. It was during these walks that he for the first time perceived everywhere along the streets enormous red bills, blazing with the words: HUILE CEPHALIQUE.

While all these catastrophes were falling upon the waning fortunes of the "Reine des Roses," the firm of A. Popinot & Co. was brilliant with the rising glow of success. Taking the advice of Gaudissart and Finot, Anselme had launched his oil with the utmost audacity. Two thousand handbills had been left, within three days, in the most conspicuous places of Paris. No one could escape being brought face to face with the Huile Cephalique, and reading in the concise phrases of Finot of the impossibility of making the hair grow, and the danger of dyeing it, accompanied with the quotation from the address read at the Academy of Sciences by Vauquelin; a certificate of life for dead hair, promised to all who would employ the Huile Cephalique. All the hairdressers, wig-makers and perfumers of Paris had decorated their doors with gilded frames, containing a beautiful print on vellum paper, at the head of which was the engraving of "Hero and Leander," reduced size, with this inscription:

"The ancients preserved their hair by using the Huile Cephalique."

"He has invented permanent frames, for a lasting advertisement," said Birotteau to himself, standing before the shop-window of the "Cloche d'Argent."

"Then you have not seen, in your own window," said his daughter, "a frame which Monsieur Anselme himself brought, when he placed three hundred bottles of the oil with Celestin?"

"No," he replied.

"Célestin has already sold fifty to passers-by," she continued, "and sixty to the trade."

"Ah?" he said.

The perfumer, stunned by the thousand bells which misery rings in the ears of its victims, lived in a sort of continual dizziness, in which he scarcely realized what was passing around him.

The evening before, Popinot had waited an hour for him, and had then gone away after having seen no one except Constance and Césarine, who had told him that César was absorbed by his important business affair.

"Ah! yes," returned Popinot, "you mean the affair of the land speculation."

Luckily, Popinot had seen neither the Ragons, nor Pillerault, nor his uncle the judge, for he had not left the Rue des Cinq-Diamants for the last month, passing all his nights and even his Sundays at the shop. He did not allow himself more than two hours sleep a night; for the poor boy had only two clerks, and as things were going, he needed at least four.

In business, everything depends upon taking advantage of the right opportunity; and Popinot had his dreams of being able to go to his aunt and uncle, and saying: "I am saved; my fortune is made!" and of going to Birotteau and handing him thirty or forty thousand francs as his share of the first half year's profits. Being totally ignorant of Roguin's flight, and César's trouble, he of course said nothing indiscreet to Madame Birotteau.

Popinot promised Finot five hundred francs for each important journal which should speak three times a month of the Huile Cephalique, and three hundred francs for each second-rate journal. There were ten of each class, and Finot saw visions of three thousand francs for himself out of these eight thousand—his first throw upon the great green carpet of speculation. He cast himself, then, like a lion upon his friends and acquaintances, haunted editors' sanctums and the green-rooms of all the theaters, saying: "Just pay a little attention to this oil. It is nothing of mine, but I am interested in it on account of a friend, Gaudissart, a thoroughly good fellow." He inserted little notices at the bottom of a column, leaving money to pay the editors. Strategic

and alert, and always on the lookout to seize an opportunity, he wrote letters, flattered everybody's self-love, and rendered all sorts of services to editors-in-chief, in order to obtain articles. Money, dinners, compliments—all served his purpose, and the result was that, as everybody's friend, he made the Huile Cephalique triumph over Regnauld, the Mixture Brésilienne, and all the other inventions of the kind. There was not a journal which did not speak of the Huile Cephalique, and of its agreement with Vauquelin's analyses; which did not ridicule those who believed that it was possible to make the hair grow, nor fail to proclaim the danger of hair dyes.

These articles rejoiced the soul of Gaudissart, who fully believed in the efficacy of wholesale advertisement, and who was following up the attack with vigor in all the provincial towns. In those days, journals were read religiously, from title to printer's name, and thus, thanks to the ingenuity of Finot, the name of the Huile Cephalique was in everybody's mouth. The firm of *A. Popinot & Co.* was at the same time flaunted upon every wall and in every shop-window.

César, incapable of measuring the importance of such publicity, contented himself with simply saying to Césarine: "Popinot is following in my footsteps," not realizing that the difference in the times, and the new methods of doing things, were embracing much more promptly and rapidly than formerly the commercial world. Birotteau had not set foot in his manufactory since the ball, and he was ignorant of the activity which Popinot was displaying there. Anselme was keeping all Birotteau's workmen busy, and he slept there every night; he saw Césarine everywhere, in every box and every advertisement; and he said to himself: "She will be my wife!" as, with shirt-sleeves turned back up to his elbows, he vigorously nailed up cases which his clerks were too busy to attend to.

The next day, after having spent the whole night in planning what he should say and should not say to the great banker, César went to the Rue du Houssaye, and with violently beating heart entered the abode of the great man. Constance and Birotteau, belonging to the smaller commerce of Paris, and never needing to do business upon credit, had had no association with any banking establishments, large or small, and were therefore entirely unknown in banking circles. Perhaps it is a mistake not to establish credit, however useless; opinions differ upon this point. However that may be, Birotteau deeply regretted now his neglect in not doing so; but, as a deputy, and a political man, he thought that he had only to send in his name to be received; he knew nothing of the almost royal state which distinguished the audiences of this banker.

Introduced into the salon which served as anteroom for the private cabinet of the celebrated man, Birotteau found himself in the midst of a numerous company composed of deputies, authors, journalists, brokers and business men, some of whom seemed to be enough at home to go directly to the door of the cabinet, where they were immediately admitted.

"What am I in the midst of this?" thought Birotteau, humbly. On his right he heard a discussion concerning the loan necessary for the completion of certain canals; and it was a question of millions! On his left, some journalists were talking of a meeting which had been held the previous day, and of a speech which the banker had made. During the two hours that he waited, Birotteau saw the great man thrice come out a few steps beyond the door of his room, with distinguished visitors. François Keller, the last time, accompanied General Foy as far as the entrance of the anteroom.

"There is no chance for me!" thought Birotteau, despondingly, his heart contracting.

As the banker returned to his private room, the troop of courtiers and friends assailed him like a pack of wolves, and some of the boldest even succeeded in entering his study with him. The conferences lasted five minutes, ten minutes, sometimes a quarter of an hour. Some of the petitioners went away with down-

cast looks, others had an air of satisfaction, even of importance. The time slipped away; Birotteau watched the clock anxiously. No one paid the least attention to his secret sorrow as he sat there in the gilded armchair by the fireplace, at the door of the room which contained that universal panacea, credit! César thought miserably of the one occasion upon which he had been like a king in his own house, as this man ruled here every day of his life; and he contrasted his past with his present situation. Bitter thought! Over and over again he prayed Heaven that this man's heart might be favorably disposed toward him, for he detected, beneath the surface appearance of popular good-nature, an insolence, an angry tyranny, and a brutal desire for power, which frightened his gentle soul.

At length, when there were only ten or twelve people left, Birotteau resolved, when he should hear the door of the study move, to stand up, and draw the attention of the great orator by saying, "I am Birotteau!" The grenadier who first threw himself into the redoubt at Moscow did not display more courage than did the perfumer in resolving upon this maneuver.

"After all, I am a deputy," he thought, as he rose to announce his name.

Francois Keller's face became courteous, and he evidently wished to appear amiable, as he looked at the perfumer's red ribbon, drew back, opened the door of his study, and indicated the way to him, staying, himself, for some time, talking to two individuals who had darted up the stairs with the violence of a waterspout.

"Decazes wants to speak with you," said one of the two.

They talked for a few moments, and then the banker, taking the attitude of the frog who tried to imitate the ox, said:

"We will go together to the Chamber."

"How can he pay any attention to his own affairs?" thought Birotteau, quite bewildered by what he saw and heard

The sun of such sparkling superiority dazzled the perfumer, as the bright light blinds insects that are only accustomed to the shadows of night. On one table he saw account books, open volumes of the "Moniteur," and reports of the proceedings at the Chamber; on another, heaped-up maps, papers, plans, and the thousand and one projects confided to a man like Keller. The royal luxury of the room, filled with pictures, statues and works of art; the ornaments upon the mantel; the heaped-up evidences of national and foreign interests—all made an impression upon Birotteau, augmented his terror and froze his blood. Upon Keller's desk were letters and circulars, before which the banker seated himself, and began to rapidly sign those letters which needed no examination.

"To what do I owe the honor of your visit?" he asked.

At these words, pronounced for him alone by the voice which spoke to all Europe, while the busy hand went rapidly to and fro over the paper, the poor perfumer grew both hot and cold.

"Sir," he replied, "I do not wish to take too much of your time, and will try to be brief. I have come purely upon a matter of business, namely, to see if your establishment will give me credit. As a former judge at the tribunal of commerce, and well-known at the Bank, you understand that if I had a full purse I should have no difficulty in obtaining credit. I have had the honor of sitting at the tribunal with Baron Thibon, and he certainly would not refuse me. But I have never made use of my signature, and you know that in such cases a negotiation presents certain difficulties—" Just here Keller moved his head, and Birotteau took the movement for a gesture of impatience.

"Sir," he continued, "the fact is this: I am engaged in a territorial affair, outside of my regular business—"

François Keller, who had been reading and signing uninterruptedly, without appearing to pay any attention to what César was saying, now turned his head and nodded. Birotteau took this for en-

couragement, and breathed freely once more.

"Go on; I am listening," said Keller, good-naturedly.

"I have become half-owner of some land situated in the neighborhood of the Madeleine," continued Birotteau.

"Yes, I heard them talking at Nucingen's of this immense affair, in which the firm of Claparon is engaged," replied the banker.

"Well," resumed the perfumer, "credit to the amount of a hundred thousand francs, with security upon my half in this affair, or upon my business property, would suffice to tide me over until the moment when I shall realize money from some of my other affairs. If it was necessary, I could give you deeds upon a new firm, the house of A. Popinot & Co., which—"

But Keller appeared to care very little about the firm of Popinot & Co., and Birotteau perceived that he was on the wrong tack; he stopped, andthen, alarmed at the silence, he resumed:

"As for the rates of interest, we—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the banker, "all that can easily be arranged; do not doubt my desire to accommodate you. But you doubtless are aware that I am extremely busy, and you had better apply to my brother Adolphe, and explain to him the nature of your securities; if he approves of the matter, you can come back here with him to-morrow or the next day, at the hour when I am in the habit of examining closely into business matters —namely, five o'clock in the morning. We shall be proud to have your confidence, for you are one of those important royalists of whom one may be the political enemy, and yet whose esteem is flattering—"

"Sir," said the perfumer, much elated by this phrase of the tribune, "I am as deserving of the honor which you do me, as of the signal and royal favor which I have merited by sitting at the consular tribunal and by fighting—"

"Yes," replied the banker, hastily, "the reputation which you enjoy is certainly a passport, Monsieur Birotteau. You have only to propose feasible terms, and you can count upon our encouragement."

Just then a lady, Madame Keller, one of the two daughters of the Comte de Gondreville, opened a door which Birotteau, until then, had not perceived.

"My dear," she said, "I would like to see you before the meeting of the Chamber."

"It is two o'clock," exclaimed the banker; "the battle has already begun. Excuse me, sir; it is a question of the overthrow of the ministry; go and see my brother."

And accompanying the perfumer to the door of the room, he said to one of the people in attendance:

"Conduct this gentleman to Monsieur Adolphe."

While he was crossing the labyrinth of staircases, guided by a man in livery, on his way to a private room, less sumptuous than that of the chief of the house, but more useful, the perfumer, suspended upon an *if*, caressed his chin, fondly hoping that the flatteries of a celebrated man were a good augury of the success of his mission; and he regretted that an enemy of the Bourbons was so gracious, so talented, and such a great orator.

Full of these illusions, he entered a bare, cold study, furnished with two revolving desks, with shabby armchairs, old curtains and a thin carpet. This study was to the other what a kitchen is to a dining-room, or a manufactory to a shop. There, banking and business affairs were ripened, enterprises were concluded upon, and audacious undertakings consummated.

The two brothers had each his rôle. Up above, François, brilliant and politic, played the part of a king, distributing gracious promises, and making himself agreeable to all; with him all was easy. Below, Adolphe made excuses for his brother on the score of his political preoccupations, and made the final decisions himself; he was the difficult one of the establishment. And therefore two words were necessary before a bargain with this perfidious firm could be concluded. Often

the gracious "yes" of the luxurious study became a dry "no" in Adolphe's office.

The banker's brother was talking with the famous Palma, the confidential adviser of the house of Keller, who withdrew when the perfumer appeared. After Birotteau had explained his errand, Adolphe, the more cunning one of the two brothers, like a lynx with his keen eye, thin lips and sharp expression, threw over his spectacles a look at Birotteau which resembled that of a vulture.

"Be good enough," he said, "to send me the deeds upon which the affair of the Madeleine rests; the security lies with them, and we must examine them before discussing the question of interest with you. If it proves to be all right, we might, in order not to be too hard upon you, content ourselves with a part of the profits, instead of a discount."

"I see how things will end," thought Birotteau as he returned to his home. "Like the hunted beaver, I shall have to part with some of my skin. But it is better to be shaved than to die."

He returned in a very happy state of mind.

"I am saved," he told Césarine: "the Kellers will give me credit."

XVII.

It was not until the 29th of December that Birotteau found himself once more face to face with Adolphe Keller. The first time that the perfumer made an attempt to see him, Adolphe had gone to inspect some property six leagues or more from Paris, which the great orator thought of purchasing. The next time, both the Kellers were too busy to see him; they were negotiating a loan, and about to present the subject to the consideration of the Chamber; and they begged Monsieur Birotteau to return upon the following Friday. These delays made the perfumer almost beside himself with anxiety; but at length the appointed Friday arrived, and Birotteau found himself in the study, seated by the fire-place, facing the window, with Adolphe Keller sitting opposite to him.

"This is all correct, sir," said the banker, laying his hand upon the deeds, "but what have you paid upon the price of the land?"

"A hundred and forty thousand francs," replied Birotteau.

"In money?"

"No, in bills."

"Are they paid?"

"They have not yet become due."

"Now, supposing you have paid more for the land than it is worth, where would be our security?" retured the banker. "It would rest simply upon your good reputation, and the consideration in which you are held; and business is not done upon a basis of sentiment. If you had paid two hundred thousand francs, we would have had then a good security for a hundred thousand, to answer for the hundred thousand francs discounted. The result for us would be that we would be proprietors of your part, in making the payment instead of you, and therefore naturally we want to be sure that it is a good investment. As we would have to wait five years in order to double the value of the land, it seems to me the money would be worth more in the bank. So many things might happen, you know! As for getting credit in order to pay bills of exchange, that is a dangerous maneuver! it is only putting off the evil day. We cannot accommodate you."

This sentence struck Birotteau with as great a shock as if the executioner had laid his iron hand upon his shoulder, and he fairly lost his presence of mind.

"My brother," observed Adolphe, after a little pause, "has taken a great interest in you, and has spoken to me of you. Tell me a little about your affairs."

The banker, interested in sounding the depths of the perfumer's character, questioned him, much in the manner that Judge Popinot would have questioned a criminal; and Birotteau, deceived and encouraged by his attentive air, gave him a full account of his enterprises, including the Double Pâte des Sultanes, the Eau Carminative, the affair with

Roguin, and his lawsuit about the mortgage upon which nothing had been received. As he saw the smiling and thoughtful way in which Keller listened to him, and his wise nods, Birotteau said to himself:

"He is paying attention! I am interesting him! I shall get the credit after all!"

But Adolphe Keller was laughing at Birotteau, just as the perfumer had laughed at Molineux. Birotteau, extremely loquacious, as men are apt to be whose minds are more or less unbalanced by misfortune, showed himself in his true light; he gave his own measure when he proposed as security the Huile Cephalique and the firm of Popinot, his last venture. Led on by a false hope, he allowed himself to be sounded and examined by Adolphe Keller, who recognized in the perfumer a dunce of a royalist, on the brink of failure. Delighted at the prospect of witnessing the failure of a deputy mayor, a man who had been decorated, and who possessed power, Adolphe at length told Birotteau curtly that he could neither open an account with him, nor speak a favorable word for him to his brother Francois, the great orator. If Francois chose to be foolishly generous, in helping people whose opinions were contrary to his own, and who were his political enemies, he, Adolphe, should consider it his duty to oppose him to the utmost of his power, and to prevent him from extending a hand to an old enemy of Napoleon, and one who had been wounded at Saint Roch.

Birotteau, much exasperated, tried to say something about the covetousness, cruelty, and false philanthropy of the bank; but he only succeeded in stammering a few words about the Bank of France.

"But," returned Adolphe Keller, "that bank will never make a discount which a simple banker has refused."

"The Bank," said Birotteau, "has always seemed to me to fail in its destined object when it congratulates itself, in presenting its reports, upon having used not more than one or two hundred thousand francs in connection with Parisian commerce, for it should be its guardian."

Adolphe smiled, and rose with the air of a man who is greatly bored.

"The Bank," he said, "has enough to do with defending itself against bad currency and false securities, without studying the affairs of all those who would like to make use of it."

"Where in the world shall I find the ten thousand francs which I must have to-morrow, Saturday, the 30th?" thought Birotteau as he crossed the court.

According to custom payments are made on the 30th, when the 31st happens to be a holiday.

When he reached the carriage-gate, his eyes blinded with tears, the perfumer scarcely saw a handsome English horse, which drew up suddenly before the door, and which was harnessed to one of the prettiest cabriolets that at that time could be found in all Paris. He barely escaped being run over by this equipage, and it occurred to him that it would not have been a bad way for him out of his difficulties, since he would have died by accident, and the confusion in his affairs would have been laid to that cause. He did not recognize Du Tillet, who, in elegant morning costume, threw the reins to his groom, and tossed a covering over the back of the thoroughbred animal he had been driving.

"And how do you happen to be here?" he asked then, accosting his former benefactor.

But Du Tillet knew well enough the answer to his own question, for the Kellers had asked information concerning Birotteau from Claparon, who, referring to Du Tillet, had demolished the reputation of the perfumer. Although suddenly restrained, the tears of the poor merchant spoke eloquently enough.

"Have you been to ask some favor of these Arabs," asked Du Tillet, "of these murderers of commerce, who have played shameful tricks, lowering the values of merchandise in order to buy it all in and sell at a high figure, and forcing prices when they have secured a monopoly of the goods—these atrocious pirates, who have neither faith, nor law, nor soul? Are you

then ignorant of what they are capable? They will open a credit with you when you have a fine affair on hand, and close it at a critical moment, forcing you thus to sell at almost any price. Havre, Bordeaux and Marseilles could tell you fine things about them. Politics serve them as a cloak for many a dirty job, you see. And so I have no scruple in talking in this way about them. Let us stroll a little way, my dear Birotteau. Joseph, walk my horse up and down; he is too warm." And he turned toward the boulevard.

"Look here, my dear benefactor—for you *are* my benefactor," he continued, "do you need any money? Those miserable fellows have asked for security, but I, who know you, offer you money upon no other security than your simple note. I have honorably made my fortune, after great effort. I went to Germany in search of it, and I was successful. I owe much to your advice and caution, and I am grateful. If you want ten thousand francs, they are yours."

"What!" exclaimed César, "is that true? Are you not mocking me? Yes, it is a fact that I am a little embarrassed, but it is only temporary."

"I know; it is that affair with Roguin," replied Du Tillet. "I myself am in for ten thousand francs that the old rascal borrowed of me before he went away. But you are not a Roguin; I know you well, and know that you would sooner blow out your brains than cause me to lose a sou. Here we are at the Rue de la Chaussee d'Antin; come up to my rooms."

Du Tillet took delight in conducting his former patron through his apartments, instead of taking him into the office, and he went slowly, in order to give him full time to notice a beautiful and sumptuous dining-room, ornamented with pictures bought in Germany, and two salons of an elegance and luxury which Birotteau had never seen equaled save at the Duke of Lenoncourt's. The perfumer's eyes were dazzled by gilding, works of art, ornaments, precious vases, and a thousand details which cast entirely in the shade the luxury of Constance's apartments; and, knowing the price of his own folly, he thought:

"Where can he have got so many millions?"

He entered a bedroom, which was as far superior to Madame Birotteau's as the abode of a prima-donna excels the attic room of a ballet dancer. The ceiling, of violet satin, was relieved by folds of white satin. An ermine rug lay before the bed, upon the violet colors of an Eastern carpet. The furniture, and all the accessories of the room, were new and odd in form, and of wonderful luxury. The perfumer took particular notice of a beautiful clock representing Cupid and Psyche, the sole copy in existence of one that had recently been made for a celebrated banker.

At length they reached an elegant little bachelor study, coquettish, and breathing more of love than of finance, with its paper-cutter of sculptured gold, its paperweights of malachite, and all the costly trifles of an unbridled luxury. The carpet, one of the richest productions of Belgium, was so soft and thick that each footstep was a surprise.

Du Tillet seated the poor, dazzled, astonished perfumer beside the fire-place.

"Will you breakfast with me?" he asked; and he rang the bell. A valet appeared, better dressed than Birotteau himself.

"Tell Monsieur Legras to come up," said Du Tillet; "then go and ask Joseph to come here; you will find him at the door of the Keller's bank; go in there, and say to Adolphe Keller that instead of coming to see him, I will wait for him here until it is time to go to the Bourse. And have breakfast brought, quickly!"

The words stupefied the perfumer.

"He makes that powerful Adolphe Keller come to him; he whistles for him as he would to a dog! he, Du Tillet!" he thought.

A tiny page entered, and unfolded a table which Birotteau had not noticed until then, so small was it, and put upon it a *pâté de foie gras*, a bottle of Bordeaux

wine, and other luxurious viands which appeared upon Birotteau's table only two or three times a year, upon state occasions.

Du Tillet enjoyed the situation thoroughly. His hate for the only man who had the right to despise him spread such a cheering warmth throughout his whole being that it caused in him the same sensation that a man feels upon beholding a sheep defending itself against a tiger. A generous idea passed through his mind; he asked himself if his vengeance was not yet accomplished, and wavered between awakened mercy and ancient hate.

"I can utterly destroy this man, commercially," he thought: "I have power of life and death over him, his wife who scorns me, and his daughter whose hand at one time appeared the acme of success and fortune to me. I have his money, and will let the old fool swim at the end of the rope which I hold."

Honest people fail in tact, because they have no conception of *détours* and mental reservations. Birotteau put the finishing touches to his misfortunes, irritating the tiger, piercing him to the heart unwittingly, and making him implacable by a word, a eulogy, a virtuous expression, even by the very atmosphere of his own probity. When the cashier came, he indicated César to him.

"Monsieur Legras," he said, "bring me ten thousand francs and a note for that sum made to my order at ninety days by this gentleman, Monsieur Birotteau."

Du Tille served the *pâté*, and poured out some Bordeaux wine for the perfumer, who, seeing himself saved, gave himself up to almost hysterical laughter; he played with his watch chain, and only took a mouthful when reminded by his former clerk that he was not eating anything. Birotteau thus betrayed the depth of the abyss where Du Tillet had plunged him, whence he had drawn him out, and where he could at any moment throw him again.

When the cashier had returned, and César, after having signed the note, felt the ten bank-bills in his pocket, he could no longer restrain himself. A moment before, his neighborhood and the bank were on the point of learning that he could not pay his debts, and he would have to confess his ruin to his wife; now, all was well. The happiness of the relief equaled in intensity the tortures of the defeat, and the eyes of the poor man filled with tears in spite of himself.

"What is the matter with you, my dear patron?" said Du Tillet. "Would you not do for me to-morrow what I have done for you to-day? Is it not a perfectly simple matter?"

"Du Tillet," said the good man, emphatically and gravely, rising and taking the hand of his former clerk, "I give you back all my esteem."

"What? had I forfeited it?" asked Du Tillet, blushing at this attack upon him in the height of his prosperity.

Birotteau immediately saw his stupid mistake, and stammered out a reply as best he could. "Lost—well, not precisely," he said; "but I heard certain things about you—"

"You have put your foot in it now, old fellow," said Du Tillet, and with the words he returned to his former project of overthrowing this virtue, and rolling it under foot, of holding up to scorn the good and honorable man who had detected him in a theft.

Every enmity, political or private, of woman to woman, or man to man, has its root in a similar cause. One man does not hate another because of a compromised interest, a wound, or even an affront; everything of that kind can be remedied. But to have been detected in the very act of a crime is more than any man can forgive. The duel which is sure to follow ends only with the death of one or the other.

"Oh!" said Du Tillet, lightly; "I understand you. You have heard that I have been borrowing money; but I assure you that I have an ample fortune, on a firm basis. You know yourself that I had nothing; and young people sometimes find themselves in tight places; but if they borrow, and then pay again

—why, they are more honest than France itself!"

"That's true," said Birotteau. "My child—God—Is it not Voltaire who has said:

"'Il fit du repentir la vertu des mortels'?"

"Provided," returned Du Tillet, yet more exasperated by this quotation, "provided that one does not run away with his neighbor's fortune, like a coward and a mean fellow; as, for example, if you should fail before three months, and my ten thousand francs should be gone—"

"If I should fail!" echoed Birotteau, who had drank three glasses of wine, and was fairly intoxicated with joy. "My opinions upon the subject of bankruptcy are well known! Bankruptcy is the death of a merchant!"

"To your health!" said Du Tillet.

"To your prosperity!" returned the perfumer. "Why do you not honor us with your custom?"

"To tell you the truth," replied Du Tillet, "I am afraid of Madame César. She always did make an impression upon me! and if you were not my patron and benefactor, upon my word, I—"

"Ah! you are not the first one who has found her beautiful," interrupted Birotteau; "but she is my wife, and she loves me! Come, Du Tillet, my friend!" he continued, "do not do things by halves."

"What do you mean?" asked the other.

Birotteau explained the affair of the land around the Madeleine to Du Tillet, who appeared much interested, and complimented the perfumer upon his penetration and forethought, and praised the whole affair.

"Well, I am very glad of your approbation," said Birotteau, "for your opinion has great weight in the Bank, Du Tillet. Now, my dear boy, can you not procure me credit at the Bank of France, while I am waiting for profits from the Huile Cephalique?"

"I can send you to the Nucingen establishment," replied Du Tillet, promising himself much enjoyment in seeing his victim take all the steps in the dance of failure.

Ferdinand placed himself at his desk, and wrote the following letter:

"*To the Baron de Nucingen.*

"Paris.

"My dear Baron—The bearer of this letter is Monsieur César Birotteau, deputy mayor of the second district, and one of the most celebrated perfumers in Paris; he desires to open an account with you. Do all that he asks of you; in obliging him you will oblige

"Your friend,

"F. du Tillet."

Du Tillet omitted to dot the "i" in his name. For those with whom he did business, this voluntary error was a preconcerted sign. The warmest and most favorable recommendations in such a case went for nothing. A letter, emphasized by exclamation points, in which Du Tillet figuratively went down upon his knees in supplication, was often drawn from him by powerful considerations which he did not like to ignore; but by this simple ruse it was as good as not sent at all. In seeing the "i" without a dot, his friend would turn the cold shoulder to the suppliant. Many men, and men of consideration and good standing, too, are thus played with like children, by business men, by bankers and by lawyers, who all have two signatures, with which even the most acute can be deceived.

"You have saved me, Du Tillet!" said César, when he had read this letter.

"If you go and ask for the money," replied Du Tillet, "Nucingen will give you as much as you want, after he has read my letter. Unluckily, my money is all tied up for a few days; if it were not for that I would not send you to any of these banking princes—for the Kellers are only pygmies, compared to the Baron de Nucingen. With my letter, you will be all right for the 15th of January, and after that we will see. Nucingen and I are the best friends in the world, and he would not disoblige me for a million."

"It is as good as a security for pay-

ment," thought Birotteau, filled with gratitude for Du Tillet. "Ah, well! a good deed is never lost;" and he walked along toward home, moralizing upon this theme.

One thought, however, disturbed his happiness. For several days he had succeeded in preventing his wife from examining the account books, had thrown the burden of the accounts upon Celestin, helping him himself, and had persuaded his wife and daughter to enjoy the beautiful home which he had prepared for them; but, as soon as the novelty should be exhausted, he knew that Madame Birotteau would rather die than give up her oversight of the details of the establishment. Birotteau was at the end of his resources; he had used up all his artifice in preventing any knowledge of his embarrassments from coming to his wife. Constance had strongly disapproved of sending out the bills, had scolded the clerks for it, and accused Celestin of wanting to ruin the business, believing that the idea was purely his; and Celestin, by Birotteau's order, allowed himself to be so scolded. The clerks knew well that Madame César ruled over her husband; it is possible to deceive the public, but not those of one's own household, as to who is the true head of the house. Birotteau was obliged, therefore, to confess his real situation to his wife, for the account with Du Tillet would have to be explained. Upon his return, it was not without a shiver that Birotteau saw his wife seated at her desk, examining the accounts.

"With what will you make to-morrow's payments?" she whispered to him, when he had seated himself beside her.

"With money," he replied, drawing the bank-bills from his pocket, and making a sign to Celestin to take them.

"Where did you get them?" she asked.

"I will tell you all about it this evening," he said. "Celestin, make a memorandum, the end of March a note for ten thousand francs, order of Du Tillet."

"Du Tillet!" repeated Constance, in alarm.

"I am going to see Popinot," said César. "It is a shame that I have not been there before. Does his oil sell well?"

"The three hundred bottles which he left with us are all gone." replied the clerk.

"Birotteau, don't go out yet; I want to speak to you," said Constance, taking him by the arm and leading him into her room with a haste which under other circumstances would have been laughable.

"Du Tillet," she said, when she reached her room, and had assured herself that no one was there except Césarine; "Du Tillet, who stole a thousand ecus from us! You are having business with Du Tillet, a monster!"

"That was only a youthful folly," returned the perfumer.

"Now listen, Birotteau," she said. "You are not like yourself; you do not go any more to the manufactory, and something is the matter! Tell me all about it; I want to know everything."

"Well!" said Birotteau, in desperation, "we have just escaped being ruined. It was only this very morning that I thought it must be so, but now everything is all right again."

And he related the horrible history of the last fortnight.

"That was the cause of your illness!" exclaimed Constance.

"Yes, mamma!" cried Césarine. "You don't know how brave papa has been. I only wish I may be loved as he loves you. He thought of nothing except your unhappiness."

"My dream has come true," exclaimed the poor woman, sinking into her armchair near the fire-place, pale and trembling. "I foresaw it all. I told you, on that fatal night in our old bedroom which you have had torn to pieces, that we should be ruined. My poor Césarine! I—"

"There you go!" exclaimed Birotteau. "Don't take away my courage, just when I need it most."

"Pardon me, my dear," said Constance, taking César's hand and pressing it with a tenderness which went to the poor man's heart. "I am wrong. Misfortune has come, and I will be silent, re-

signed, and full of strength. No, you shall never hear a complaint." She threw herself into César's arms, and sobbingly exclaimed:

"Courage, dear, courage! I will have enough for both, if it is necessary."

"My oil," said César; "my oil will save us."

"May the Lord protect us!" returned Constance.

"Will not Anselme help us, papa?" asked Césarine.

"I am going to see him now," said César, deeply moved by the heartrending accent of his wife. "Constance, have no more fear. Here, read this letter from Du Tillet to the Baron de Nucingen; we are sure of getting credit. By that time I shall have won my lawsuit. Besides," he added, with excusable mendacity, "we have Uncle Pillerault. All that is necessary is courage."

"If that were all that is necessary," said Constance, smiling.

Birotteau, relieved of a great weight, walked like a man just set at liberty, although he felt that indefinable exhaustion which is always caused by such a drain upon the nervous system as he had just experienced. He had already grown older.

XVIII.

THE establishment of A. Popinot, Rue des Cinq-Diamants, had greatly changed during the last two months. The shop had been re-painted, and the shelves and cases full of bottles were enough to rejoice the eyes of any one who could recognize the signs of prosperity. The floor of the shop was strewn with wrapping-paper. The storehouse contained little casks of different oils, of which the agency had been obtained for Popinot by the indefatigable Gaudissart. The accounts were kept upstairs. An old cook took charge of the housekeeping for Popinot and three clerks. Popinot himself, shut into a corner of the shop, at a desk behind a glass partition, showed himself, dressed in a serge apron, with double sleeves of green linen, his pen behind his ear, except when it was busily employed among a heap of papers, as at the moment when Birotteau came in, when he was busy receiving letters and orders from his courier, who had just arrived.

At the words: "Well, my boy?" pronounced by his former master, he raised his head, shut and locked his desk, and came forward joyfully; his nose was red, for there was no fire in the shop, the door of which stood open.

"I was afraid that you were never coming," he said, respectfully.

The clerks hastened to look upon the great perfumery man, the decorated mayor, the partner of their own master. This mute homage flattered the perfumer, who, lately such a small man in the presence of the Kellers, saw now the opportunity to imitate them; he caressed his chin, rising upon his heels and talking his commonplaces.

"Well, my friend," he remarked, "do you get up early here?"

"We do not always go to bed," replied Popinot; "we must cling to success."

"Well, what did I tell you?" said Birotteau. "My oil is a fortune."

"Yes, sir," replied Popinot, "but the methods of introducing it count for something; I have given a setting to your diamond."

"Well, now," said the perfumer, "just how do we stand? Are there any profits?"

"At the end of one month!" cried Popinot. "Did you really think there would be? Gaudissart has only been on the road twenty-five days; and he took a post-chaise without letting me know. Oh! he is very devoted. We owe much to my uncle. The journals," he added, in a low tone, "will cost us twelve thousand francs."

"The journals!" exclaimed the perfumer.

"You have not read them?"

"No."

"Then you do not know about it," said Popinot. "Twenty thousand francs' worth of handbills, frames and prints!—a hundred thousand bottles purchased!

Ah! so far it is all sacrifice. The manufacturing has been carried forward on a great scale. If you had been to the factory, where I have often passed whole nights, you would have seen some little nut-crackers of my own invention, which cannot be pierced by worms. On my own account I have made in the last five days ten thousand francs in nothing but commissions upon the oils of the drug-trade."

"What a good head!" said Birotteau, laying his hand upon Popinot's hair and stroking it as if the young man had been a baby.

Just then several people entered, and Birotteau left Popinot, after telling him that on Sunday they were to dine at his Aunt Ragon's.

"It is very extraordinary." he said to himself; "a clerk become a merchant in twenty-four hours! It seemed to me that he was a little stiff in his manner, when I put my hand on his head, as if he were already Francois Keller."

Birotteau did not consider that all the clerks had been looking on, and that the master of a house has to preserve his own dignity in his own establishment.

This Sunday dinner at the Ragons was destined to be the last joy of the nineteen happy years of Birotteau's married life. Ragon lived on the Rue du Petit-Bourbon-Saint-Sulpice, in the second story of an old, respectable looking house, in an old suite of rooms where pier-glasses and dancing shepherdesses abounded, and where the furniture, the clocks, the linen and the dishes were all patriarchal, so old that they were like new.

The salon, hung with old damask, and adorned with brocatelle curtains, contained portraits of duchesses, beauties of a former day, and one superb picture of a certain Popinot, an alderman of Sancerre, painted by Latour, Madame Ragon's father, a most excellent artist. The household was completed by a little King Charles spaniel belonging to Madame Ragon, who was in the habit of curling himself up picturesquely upon a little hard sofa.

Among their many virtues, the Ragons were conspicuous for their possession of some rare old wines, and of some cordials which certain people who had been headstrong enough to love the beautiful Madame Ragon (it was said, without hope) had brought her from the Isles. And so their little dinners were much prized.

An old cook, Jeannette, served the two old people with blind devotion. Instead of putting her money into the savings-bank, she invested it in lotteries, in the hope of bringing home one day immense winnings to her master and mistress. On the Sundays when they had company, she, in spite of her sixty years, was first in the kitchen overseeing the dishes, and then in the dining-room serving them with an agility which, according to Monsieur Ragon's often repeated remark, would have given points to Mademoiselle Contat in her rôle of Suzanne in the "Mariage de Figaro."

The invited guests were Judge Popinot, Uncle Pillerault, Anselme, the three Birotteaus, the three Matifats and the Abbe Loraux. Madame Matifat, who had appeared at the ball in a turban, came to this gathering dressed in blue velvet, great cotton stockings and goat-skin shoes, gloves of chamois-skin bordered with green plush, and a hat doubled back with rose-color, ornamented with bear's ears. These ten persons were assembled at five o'clock. The Ragons always begged their guests to be prompt, and when they themselves were invited anywhere, their entertainers took care to have dinner at the same hour, for the stomachs of septuagenarians could not readily accommodate themselves to new and fashionable hours.

Césarine knew that Madame Ragon would place her beside Anselme; for all women understand a love affair; and as she had expected, she was seated where she had only to turn her head to speak to Popinot. Her mother, who had reluctantly given up the thought of Crottat for her—Crottat, who played in her mind the rôle of a hereditary prince—had assisted at her toilet, not without bitter reflections. Her maternal care drew down the modest gauze fichu in such a way as to slightly uncover Césarine's shoulders and

show her beautiful neck. The Greek corsage, crossed from left to right, opened a trifle, and showed delicious curves. The gray merino dress, with its flounces edged with green, fitted one of the finest and most graceful figures in the world. The ears were hung with pendants of wrought gold. The hair, raised *à la Chinoise*, showed the freshness of a skin delicately traced with veins where the pure life-blood bounded. In short, Césarine was so coquettishly beautiful that even Madame Matifat noticed and remarked upon it.

No one disturbed the low-toned conversation which the two young people were carrying on; and the talk among the older people grew more animated when Judge Popinot happened to mention Roguin's flight, and observed that he was the second notary who had become bankrupt—a crime heretofore unheard of. Madame Ragon, at the name of Roguin, had touched her brother's foot, Pillerault had tried to drown his brother's voice with his own, and both had furtively motioned toward Madame Birotteau.

"I know everything," said Constance to her friends, in a sweet, yet troubled voice.

"Well," said Madame Matifat to Birotteau, who humbly hung his head, "how much of yours did he carry away? If reports are correct, he took enough to ruin you."

"He had two hundred thousand francs of mine," replied Birotteau. "As for forty thousand which he pretended that one of his clients, whose money he had already dissipated, was to lend me, I have gone to law about it."

"You will get judgment this week," said Judge Popinot. "I thought that you would not object to have me explain your situation to monsieur, the president, who ordered an immediate examination of the case."

"Shall we win?" asked Madame Birotteau.

"I do not know," replied the judge. "Although I belong to the Chamber which is conducting the affair, I should abstain from joining in the deliberations, even if I were requested to do so."

"But can there be any doubt about such a simple matter?" asked Pillerault.

"I don't know," replied the judge. "It seems clear enough, but I have known counsel to be equally divided upon matters which seem even more simple."

"What, mademoiselle! has Monsieur Roguin run away?" asked Popinot, waking up at last to what was being said. "Monsieur César did not say anything about it to me, who would give my life-blood for him—"

Césarine understood well enough that the whole family was included in Anselme's last word; for even if the innocent girl could have mistaken the accent, she could not have been deceived by the look which enveloped her as with a scarlet flame.

"I know it," she replied, "and I told him so; but he concealed everything, even from my mother, and took me alone into his confidence."

"You have spoken to him about me, with reference to this," said Popinot; "you read my heart, but do you read all that is there?"

"Perhaps," she returned softly.

"I am very lucky," said Popinot. "If you will relieve me of all fear, in a year I shall be so rich that your father will be willing to receive me kindly when I speak to him of our marriage. I am not going to spend more than five hours a night in sleeping, after this."

"Don't make yourself sick," said Césarine, with an inimitable accent, throwing upon Popinot a glance which betrayed her whole heart.

"Wife," said César, as they left the table, "I believe that those two young people are in love with each other."

"Well, so much the better," replied Constance, gravely; "my daughter will be the wife of a wise man, and one full of energy. Talent is the best possession that a lover can have."

She hastily left the salon, and went into Madame Ragon's room. César, during dinner, had said several things which had made Pillerault and the judge smile, they were such palpable evidences of ignorance. They forcibly reminded the poor wife that

her husband was sadly deficient in the power necessary to fight against misfortune. She was unhappy, and instinctively distrustful of Du Tillet; and she wept in the arms of her daughter and of Madame Ragon, without caring to confess the cause of her unhappiness.

"I am nervous," she said.

"César," said Constance, as they were returning home, "you had better go to the Baron de Nucingen on the 8th, in order to be sure and have the money in time for the 15th. If there should be any difficulty, you might not know what to do, if you did not have more than a day or two."

"I will go, my dear," replied César; and then, pressing the hands of his wife and daughter, he added :

"My darlings, my New Year's gifts to you have been sad ones."

And in the darkness of the carriage the two women felt warm tears fall upon their hands.

"Don't give up hope, my dear," said Constance.

"Everything will go well, papa," added Césarine. "Monsieur Anselme Popinot told me to-night that he would shed his very blood for you."

"For me," returned César, "and for my family ; eh ? " jokingly.

Césarine made no reply, except to press her father's hand meaningly, in such a way as to make him understand that she and Anselme were betrothed.

During the first three days of the year, two hundred cards were sent to Birotteau. This wealth of false friends, these pledges of favor, are horrible to those who, like the perfumer, see themselves already drawn into the current of misfortune.

Birotteau presented himself in vain three times at the house of the famous banker, Baron de Nucingen. The commencement of the year, with its festivities, sufficiently justified the absence of the financier. On the last of these visits the perfumer succeeded in penetrating as far as the banker's study, where the head clerk, a German, told him that Monsieur de Nucingen had returned, from a ball given by the Kellers, at five o'clock that morning, and therefore would not be visible at half-past nine. Birotteau succeeded in interesting the clerk in his affairs, and talked with him for half an hour or more; and during the day he received a note from him, telling him that the baron would receive him on the following day, the 12th, at noon.

The day passed with frightful rapidity. The perfumer took a hackney-coach, and stopped a short distance from the banker's door, on account of the number of vehicles which thronged the courtyard. The poor, honest man's heart sank at the sight of the splendors of this celebrated house.

"He has liquidated twice, however," he said to himself as he mounted the superb, flower-lined staircase, and traversed the luxurious apartments by which the Baroness Delphine de Nucingen had made herself clebrated. It was the ambition of the baroness to rival the richest houses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she was not yet admitted.

The baron was breakfasting with his wife. Notwithstanding the many people who were waiting at his offices to see him, he had given orders that the friends of Du Tillet were to be admitted at any time. Birotteau trembled with hope as he saw the effect which the name of the baron had upon the hitherto insolent face of the valet-de-chambre.

"Pardon me, my dear," said the baron to his wife, with his strong German accent, rising as he spoke, and bowing to Birotteau; "this gentleman is a good royalist, and the very intimate friend of Du Tillet. Besides that, he is deputy mayor of the second district, and gives balls of Asiatic magnificence. You will make his acquaintance with pleasure."

"I should be delighted to take lessons of Madame Birotteau," said the banker's wife, "for Ferdinand" ("She calls him by his first name," thought the astonished perfumer) "has spoken to us of this bal in terms of admiration, all the more valuable because he rarely praises anything. He is a severe critic and everything must have been perfect. Shall you give another

one soon?" she asked, in extremely affable tones.

"Madame, poor people like us can rarely indulge in such amusements," he replied uncertain whether he was being complimented or ridiculed.

"Monsieur Grindot has had the direction of the restoration of your apartments," observed the baron.

"Ah! Grindot! a nice little architect who has just returned from Rome," said Madame de Nucingen. "I am crazy over him; he draws delicious pictures in my album."

No tortured conspirator could have suffered more than did Birotteau; he felt himself mocked at every word.

"Will Monsieur Birotteau breakfast with us?" asked Madame de Nucingen, with a gesture toward the well-filled table.

"Madame," replied the perfumer, "I have come on business, and am—"

"Yes!" interrupted the baron. "Madame, will you permit us to have a little conversation upon business?"

Delphine made a slight gesture of assent, saying to the baron:

"Are you going to buy some perfumery?"

The baron shrugged his shoulders, and turned to César.

"Du Tillet takes the greatest interest in you," he said.

"At last," thought the poor merchant, "we are coming to the point."

"With his letter," continued the baron, "you are entitled to credit with my house, limited only by the extent of my fortune—"

These words were as refreshing to the perfumer as the water was to Hagar, which was brought to her by the angel in the desert.

"And you will have a running account," added the banker. "This is our method of proceeding."

Birotteau had no longer any doubt. He was a business man himself, and he knew that questions are not usually considered in detail, unless there is some intention of entering into negotiations.

"I need not tell you," resumed the baron, "that great banking houses as well as small ones demand three signatures. You will make out your bills to the order of our friend Du Tillet, and I will send them the same day with my signature to the bank, and at four o'clock you will receive the amount of the bills which you signed in the morning, and which will have been indorsed by the bank. I want neither commission nor discount; nothing—for I am only too happy to oblige you. But I make one condition," he said, touching his nose slightly and cunningly.

"Monsieur, it is granted beforehand," said Birotteau, eagerly.

"A condition," continued the baron, "to which I attach the greatest importance, because I wish Madame de Nucingen, as she has just said, to take lessons of Madame Birotteau."

"Monsieur, do not mock me, I beg of you," said the perfumer.

"Monsieur Birotteau," said the financier, with a serious manner, "it is agreed that you shall invite us to your next ball. My wife is jealous; she wants to see your apartments, which have been universally praised."

"Monsieur le Baron!" ejaculated Birotteau.

"Oh!" returned the banker, "if you refuse us, you will not have your credit. You are in high favor; I happen to know that the prefect of the Seine was at your ball."

"Monsieur le Baron!" exclaimed the perfumer again.

"You had La Billardière, a gentleman of the Chamber, a good Vendéan—like yourself, who were wounded at Saint Roch."

"On the 13th Vendémiaire, monsieur," supplemented Birotteau.

"You had Monsieur de Lacépède, Monsieur Vauquelin of the Academy—"

"Monsieur le Baron!" ejaculated the perfumer for the third time.

"Eh!" said the banker, "don't be so modest, Monsieur Deputy; I have heard that the king himself has said that your ball—"

"The king?" exclaimed Birotteau.

But he had no opportunity to learn more; a young man entered the room familiarly, whose step, recognized afar off by the beautiful Delphine de Nucingen, had made her blush quickly.

"Good-morning, my dear De Marsay!" said the Baron de Nucingen. "Take my place; they say there is a great crowd waiting for me at my office. I think I know the reason of it. The mines of Wortschin are declaring a dividend! I have received a notice. You will have a hundred thousand pounds more of income, Madame de Nucingen. You can buy all sorts of things to make yourself pretty, just as if your beauty needed adorning."

"Good heavens!" cried Birotteau. "The Ragons have sold their shares!"

"Who are these people?" asked the young exquisite, smiling.

"It seems to me that these people—" said Monsieur de Nucingen, returning after he had reached the door, and then he added:

"De Marsay, this is Monsieur Birotteau, your perfumer, who gives balls of an Asiatic magnificence, and who has been decorated by the king."

De Marsay put up his glass, and said:

"Ah! true; I thought that his face was not unknown to me. I believe you are going to perfume your affairs with some cosmetic; to oil them—"

"Well! these Ragons," resumed the baron, with a discontented grimace, "had an account with me; I have accommodated them with a fortune, and they have not known how to make use of it."

"Monsieur le Baron!" exclaimed Birotteau once more.

The good man was far from having a clear understanding of his own affair, and without saluting either the baroness or De Marsay, he ran after the banker. Monsieur de Nucingen was just entering his office as Birotteau reached him, and he turned with an impatient gesture, saying:

"Well, is everything understood? You must see Du Tillet, and arrange things with him."

Birotteau, thinking that possibly De Marsay might have influence with the baron, mounted the staircase again with the swiftness of a swallow, and glided into the little room where he expected still to find the baroness and the young man. He had left Delphine waiting for her coffee; the coffee was now served, but Madame de Nucingen and her guest had disappeared.

The perfumer slowly descended the stairs again, and then hastened to Du Tillet's to find that he had gone into the country. Birotteau took a carriage and had himself rapidly driven to Nogent-sur-Marne. There he was informed that Du Tillet had started to return to Paris, and the crestfallen perfumer accordingly took his own way homeward. When he related the events of the day to his wife and daughter, he was astonished to find Constance, usually ready to croak evil warnings, now gentle and consoling, and assuring him that all would yet go well.

XIX.

THE next day Birotteau was standing sentry at seven o'clock, in the early morning twilight, at Du Tillet's door. Slipping ten francs into the porter's hand, he begged him to secure an interview for him with Du Tillet's valet; and when this gentleman appeared, he asked to be introduced into Du Tillet's apartments at the earliest possible moment that the banker would be visible, at the same time putting two gold pieces into the man's hand. These little sacrifices and great humiliations, common to petitioners, gained his object for him; and at half-past eight, when his former clerk was yawning, putting on his dressing-gown, and shaking his ideas together, Birotteau at length found himself face to face with the tiger famishing for vengeance, in whom he thought he saw his best friend.

"Help me!" said Birotteau.

"What do you want, my good César?" asked Du Tillet, familiarly.

César, not without violent beating of the heart, related the reply and the de-

mands of the Baron de Nucingen to the inattentive ears of Du Tillet, who was in the meantime looking for the bellows, and scolding the valet for the carelessness with which he had made the fire.

The valet listened, however. César did not at first perceive it, but noticing at length, he stopped short in embarrassment, and only continued when urged on by Du Tillet:—"Go on, I am listening," said the preoccupied banker.

César was hot and perspiring with agitation, but he became icy cold when Du Tillet fastened upon him his gleaming green eyes, with their threads of gold, piercing him to the heart with their diabolical light.

"My dear sir," he said, "the Bank has refused your notes passed by Claparon to Gigonnet, *without security*. Is that my fault? How could you, a former consular judge, have allowed such a thing? Before everything else, I am a banker. I will give you my money, but I could not run the risk of having my signature dishonored at the Bank. I only exist on credit. Do you want any money?"

"Can you let me have all that I shall need?" asked the perfumer.

"That depends upon the amount you need!" returned Du Tillet. "How much do you want?"

"Thirty thousand francs."

"That is a good many chimney-pots to tumble about my ears!" said Du Tillet, bursting out laughing.

Hearing this laugh, the perfumer, deceived by Du Tillet's luxury, believed it to be the laugh of a man to whom this sum was a mere trifle, and breathed more freely. Du Tillet rang the bell.

"Ask my cashier to come up," he said.

"He has not come yet, sir," replied the valet.

"Those rascals impose upon me!" exclaimed Du Tillet. "Here it is half-past eight, and they ought to have done a million francs' worth of business by this time."

Five minutes afterward, Monsieur Legras came up.

"How much money have we on hand?" asked Du Tillet.

"Only twenty thousand francs," replied the cashier. "You gave an order to invest thirty thousand francs on account, payable the 15th."

"That's true," returned Du Tillet, "I must be asleep yet."

The cashier looked at Birotteau with an ambiguous expression, and left the room.

"If truth was banished from the earth it would confide its last remarks to a cashier," observed Du Tillet. "Have you not an interest in that business of Popinot's, which has just been established?" he asked, after a horrible pause, during which the perspiration gathered in great drops on the perfumer's forehead.

"Yes," replied Birotteau, innocently; "do you think you could discount his signature for me for a large sum?"

"Bring me fifty thousand francs' worth of his acceptances, and I will get them done for you at a reasonable rate at one Gobseck's, a man who is very lenient when he has a good deal of money to invest, which is the case with him now," replied the banker.

Birotteau returned to his house with a breaking heart, without perceiving that the bankers had been tossing him about among them, like a shuttlecock on a battledore; but Constance had already guessed that all credit was impossible. If three bankers had refused, it was not likely that the Bank of France would prove to be a resource.

"Try to renew your notes," said Constance; "and go to your co-associate, Monsieur Claparon, and to all those to whom you have given notes for the 15th, and propose renewals. If you do not succeed, it will be time enough then to go to the discounter's with Popinot's paper."

"To-morrow will be the 13th!" said Birotteau, completely disheartened.

The perfumer's temperament was such that emotions made a heavy drain upon his system, and a great deal of sleep was necessary to repair the loss. Césarine led her father into the salon, and played softly to him upon the piano, while Con-

stance sat with her work near him. The poor man rested his head against the back of his chair, and every time that his eyes rested upon his wife he saw the same sweet smile upon her lips; and he fell asleep thus.

"Poor man!" murmured Constance; "may he be able to resist the tortures that are in store for him!"

"What is the matter, mamma?" asked Césarine, seeing her mother's eyes full of tears.

"My dear child," returned Constance, "your father is going to become a bankrupt. If he is obliged to make an assignment, we must ask pity from no one. My daughter, make up your mind to be a simple shop-girl. If I see you courageously taking up your part, I will have the strength to commence life anew. I know your father; he will never keep back a sou; I will give up my dowry, and everything that we possess will be sold. As for you, my child, you can take your jewels and your wardrobe over to your Uncle Pillerault's to-morrow; they cannot claim anything belonging to you."

Césarine was thoroughly alarmed upon hearing these words, pronounced so simply. She thought of applying to Anselme, but delicacy restrained her.

The next day, at nine o'clock, Birotteau was on the Rue de Provence, a prey to a very different kind of anxiety from that which he had been suffering. To ask credit is a very common thing in business; every day, in undertaking new enterprises, it is necessary to raise capital; but to ask for the renewal of a note is like the first step on the road to failure. The secret of a man's helplessness and embarrassment is then in other hands than his own. In such a case, one merchant puts himself, bound hand and foot, into the power of another merchant; and charity is not a virtue commonly practiced at the Bourse.

The perfumer, who had always gone about Paris with a bold and confident step, now, enfeebled by doubts, hesitated to enter Claparon's house: he was beginning to understand that among bankers the heart is nothing more than one of the many parts of a man's anatomy. Claparon had given so many evidences of bad breeding, that he trembled to face him.

César swallowed his last dose of courage, and mounted the staircase of a wretched little *entre-sol*, at whose windows he had noticed green curtains yellowed by the sun. He read upon the door the word "Offices" engraved in black upon a copper oval. He knocked, but no one answered, and he entered.

The place breathed of misery, avarice and negligence. No employé was visible behind the wire gratings placed breast high upon wainscotings of unpainted white wood, which served as an inclosure for tables and desks of blackened wood. These deserted offices were littered with inkstands whose ink had grown mouldy, and whose pens were in every kind of disorder; maps, papers and bills were scattered about everywhere. The floor of the first office resembled that of a boarding-house parlor, it was so rough, dirty and damp. The second room, whose door was ornamented with the word "Cash," harmonized with the sinister appearance of the first office. In one corner was a great inclosure of oak-wood, with iron gratings, furnished with an enormous iron trunk or safe, now doubtless given up to the revelries of rats. This inclosure, the door of which was open, also contained a queer old desk, and an armchair whose disreputable green covering was full of holes, through which the horsehair stuffing was escaping in little corkscrew ringlets, like those of its master. This room, evidently formerly the salon of the place, before it was converted into a banking-office, had for its principal ornament a round table covered with a green cloth, around which were old chairs of black morocco, with tarnished nails.

The chimney, doubtless of great beauty when it was new, gave no evidence of having ever had fire in it; its back was not blackened, and its fly-specked mirror had a shabby appearance, which harmonized well with a melancholy-looking wooden clock, evidently purchased by a former occupant at some auction-sale, and with a pair of candlesticks without

candles, covered with dust. The wall-paper, of a mouse-gray bordered with rose, gave evidence of frequent applications of tobacco smoke.

Birotteau, fearing that he had made some mistake, knocked thrice at the door opposite the one by which he had entered.

"Come in," called Claparon, in a voice which sounded as if it came from a considerable distance.

The room in which Birotteau found the banker was large and almost empty. It served him as a private office; but between the luxurious study of Keller and the careless surroundings of this man there was as much difference as between the palace of Versailles and the wigwam of a Huron chief. The perfumer had seen the grandeurs of banking, and he was now to witness its plebeian side. Claparon was lying on a bed in a sort of closet beyond the room, but at sight of Birotteau he rose, threw on a dirty dressing-gown, and laid down the pipe which he had been smoking.

"Sit down, sir," said the pretended banker, who, without his wig, and with his head enveloped in a colored handkerchief, seemed more hideous than ever to Birotteau.

"Will you breakfast with me?" he asked, indicating a round table, from which the papers had been hastily swept, and upon which was a miscellaneous repast. The covers were laid for two, but Claparon explained that the person whom he had been expecting had not arrived.

"Monsieur," said Birotteau, "I have come solely upon a matter of business, and I will not detain you long."

"I am overwhelmed with business," replied Claparon, pointing to a revolving desk and some tables heaped up with papers; "I do not have a single moment to myself. I never receive except upon Saturdays, but of course I am always at home to you, my dear sir. I do not find any time to enjoy myself, and I have lost all interest in business, which requires a certain amount of idleness in order to be enjoyed. I am never seen on the boulevards now, busily occupied in doing nothing. Bah! I am tired of business; I never want to hear it mentioned again; I have enough money now, and shall never have enough pleasure. Upon my word, I should like to travel; I should like to go to Italy. Oh, beloved Italy! still beautiful, even in the midst of its reverses! Adorable land, where I should doubtless meet with some majestic and lovely Italian lady. I have always loved Italian ladies. Did you ever know an Italian lady? No? Well, come with me to Italy. We will see Venice, the abode of the doges, which has unfortunately fallen into the hands of Austria, where the arts are unknown. Bah! let us leave business—canals, loans, tranquil governments, and all the rest of it. Let us travel!"

"One word, sir, and I will not detain you longer," said Birotteau. "You have transferred my notes to Monsieur Bidault."

"You mean Gigonnet," interrupted Claparon; "good little Gigonnet; a first-rate fellow."

"Yes," returned César. "I would like—and in this matter I count upon your honor and your delicacy—"

Claparon bowed.

"I would like to be able to renew them."

"Impossible!" replied the banker, shortly. "I am not alone in the affair. I have my associates, and I have to consult with them, in other matters as well as in the affair of the Madeleine, which, after all, is only a trifle. Come, let us have some breakfast, and we will talk," he continued, thinking to soften his refusal.

"Willingly," replied Birotteau, hoping that under the influence of the wine, his companion would divulge some secrets concerning the management of the land speculation, which began to look rather questionable to him.

"Good!" exclaimed the banker. "Victoire!"

At the summons an old woman appeared, dressed like a fish-seller.

"Tell my clerks," said Claparon, "that I am at home to no one, not even to Nucingen, the Kellers, Gigonnet, or any one else."

"Monsieur Lempereur is the only one who has come," replied the servant.

"He will receive the fashionable world," said Claparon. "The common people will not get beyond the first room. Tell them that I am meditating a *coup*—of champagne!"

It is impossible to intoxicate such a man as the pretended banker. César had mistaken the sprightliness of ill-bred manners for the symptoms of drunkenness, and thought that the man might possibly drop some useful hints when he had had a few more glasses; but he was mistaken. Claparon talked on, about anything and everything, with the utmost apparent freedom, but with no benefit to César. The perfumer asked him if he, who was doubtless in communication with Roguin, could not demand of him some restitution in behalf of those whom he had defrauded; but the banker put him off with vague words, and a flood of insignificant talk which meant nothing, and which was so light and trifling as to cause surprise to Birotteau, who had always understood that the man's mind was of astonishing depth and capacity. At last, remembering Du Tillet's parting advice, he asked him if he knew Monsieur Gobseck, a banker, and if he could give him his address.

"Is that what you are about, my dear sir?" asked Claparon. "Gobseck is a banker, in the same way that the executioner of Paris is a physician. His first remark is a demand for fifty per cent; and he belongs to the school of Harpagon. What securities will you give him? If he takes your simple paper, you will have to give him yourself, and wife and daughter, and everything you possess, as security, even to the kindling-wood in your cellar. Gobseck! Gobseck! In the name of misfortune, who has sent you to that man?"

"Monsieur du Tillet," replied Birotteau.

"Ah! the rascal," exclaimed Claparon; "I know him. We used to be friends, and if we are not on speaking terms now, you may be sure that I have good reason for my aversion. I have seen into the depths of his muddy soul, and I cannot bear him, with his fine airs! But you are a pretty fellow, to give us a grand ball, and then in two months come and ask for renewals! You may find it hard to get them. Come, let us do business together. You have a reputation, which would be of use to me. Du Tillet will come to a bad end! Sooner or latter, Gobseck will gobble him up. So much the better; he played me a mean trick."

After listening for an hour and a half to the unmeaning stream of words which flowed from the banker's lips, Birotteau rose to go.

"Adieu, sir," he said.

"You will have to come and see me," returned Claparon then. "The first Cayron note has been returned to us, protested, and as I am indorser, I have paid it. I shall send to your place, for we must attend to business before everything."

Birotteau felt himself as deeply wounded by this cold and mocking kindness as by the hardness of Keller and the raillery of Nucingen. The familiarity of this man, and his grotesque confidences, lighted as they were by the flames of champagne, had disgusted his soul, and he was glad to get out of the place.

He went down the staircase and into the streets, scarcely knowing what direction he took. He walked along the boulevards, and upon reaching the Rue Saint Denis, remembered Molineux, and betook himself to the Cour Batave. He mounted the dirty and winding staircase which he had once ascended in all the pride of prosperity; and remembering the meanness and greed of Molineux, he shuddered at being obliged to ask a favor of him. As at the perfumer's first visit, the landlord was seated beside his fire; but this time he had finished his breakfast. Birotteau unfolded his errand.

"Renew a note for twelve hundred francs?" exclaimed Molineux, in a tone of mocking incredulity. "You surely are not reduced to that, sir. If you do not have twelve hundred francs on the 15th, shall you really send back my bill unpaid? I should be very sorry, but I can-

not stand upon politeness in a matter of business; my tenants are my income. Without them, how could I pay what I owe? Every business man goes upon the same principle. Money knows no one; it has neither ears nor heart. The winter is a severe one, and wood is getting dear. If you do not pay upon the 15th, you will receive a little notice at noon upon the 16th. Mitral, your sheriff, is mine also, and he will do everything as quietly as possible, in consideration of your high position."

"Sir, I have never received a summons for a bill," said Birotteau.

"There is a first time for everything," replied Molineux.

Horrified by the dry ferocity of the little old man, the perfumer was completely disheartened; he seemed to hear the knell of failure sounding in his ears, and each reverberation recalled the remembrance of some one of the sayings in which his pitiless jurisprudence had been wont to indulge, upon the subject of bankrupts.

"By the way," observed Molineux, "you have neglected to put upon your notes *value received in rent*, which would preserve me from loss."

"My position forbids me to do anything which would be to the detriment of my creditors," replied the perfumer, half-stunned at the sight of the precipice opening before him.

"Very well, sir, very well," said Molineux. "I thought I had nothing more to learn in relation to tenants, but you have taught me something to-day, and that is, never to take notes in payment of rent. Your reply tells me plainly that your signature will be worthless."

Birotteau went away, disgusted with life. It is the nature of gentle souls like his to be discouraged at a first refusal, or encouraged by a single success. César's only hope now lay in the devotion of Popinot, to whom his thoughts naturally turned next.

"The poor boy," he thought. "Who would have dreamed of this when I promised at the Tuileries, only six weeks ago, to start him in business?"

XX.

It was about four o'clock, the hour at which the magistrates were in the habit of leaving the palace, and it so happened that Judge Popinot had stopped to see his nephew. He was a man gifted with a strong sense of morality, and with a sort of second sight which enabled him to judge a man's secret intentions, and to recognize the motives for the most trifling actions as well as the greatest crimes; and he looked at Birotteau scrutinizingly, although the perfumer did not suspect it. He, disconcerted at finding uncle and nephew together, seemed to the judge's penetrating gaze to be troubled, preoccupied, and thoughtful. Popinot, full of business, with pen behind his ear, was, as usual, all devotion to the father of his Césarine.

The insignificant remarks made by César to his young partner seemed to the judge to be only as the prelude to some important demand. Accordingly, instead of taking his leave, the wily magistrate remained with his nephew, rightly judging that Birotteau would soon try to rid himself of his presence by taking his own departure. When the perfumer had gone, the judge went away also, but soon detected Birotteau lingering in that part of the Rue des Cinq-Diamants which leads to the Rue Aubry le Boucher. This trifling circumstance confirmed the old man's suspicions, and going into the Rue des Lombards, he waited until he saw the perfumer re-enter Anselme's shop, when he returned there promptly himself.

"My dear Popinot," César had said as he went in, "I have come to ask a favor of you."

"What can I do for you?" asked Popinot with generous ardor.

"Ah! you can save my life!" cried the perfumer, overjoyed at the first ray of warmth which he had felt for twenty-five days, during which he had been in the midst of the icy coldness of misfortune.

"I must have fifty thousand francs upon my share of the profits; we can easily arrange for paying them back again, later."

Popinot looked earnestly at César, who lowered his eyes. Just then the judge reappeared.

"My son—" he said. "Ah! I beg your pardon, Monsieur Birotteau! My son, I forgot to say to you—" and with an imperious gesture the judge drew his nephew out into the street with him, and although he was bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves, made him walk with him toward the Rue des Lombards.

"My boy," he said, "your old master may be financially embarrassed to such an extent that he will be obliged to make an assignment. Now, when a man draws near a crisis like that, no matter how honest and upright he may be, he will try by every means to preserve his honor and put off the evil day. He will catch at every chance, like a gambler. I have seen some extraordinary examples in my lifetime of the way in which men will in desperation compromise their best friends, and pledge even what does not belong to them. I do not say that this applies to Monsieur Birotteau, for I believe him to be a man of scrupulous honesty; but if he should ask you to do anything contrary to the strict laws of commerce, such as putting your name to bills, or establishing a system of credit in your name, promise me that you will sign nothing without consulting me. Remember, that if you love his daughter, you should do nothing which may injure your chances of success. If Monsieur Birotteau must fall, why should you fall also? You would simply be depriving him of a refuge."

"Thanks, uncle, I will remember," replied Popinot, to whom César's despairing exclamation was now intelligible. He reentered his gloomy shop with a thoughtful brow. Birotteau remarked the change.

"Have the goodness to come upstairs into my room, where we can talk undisturbed," said the young man; "the clerks, although they are very busy, may happen to overhear us here."

Birotteau followed him in the greatest anxiety.

"My dear benefactor," said Anselme, "you cannot doubt my devotion; it is blindly yours. But permit me to ask if this sum will be sufficient to save you, or is it only enough to retard a catastrophe for a short time? If that is the case, why involve me in it also? You want bills at ninety days; but in three months I shall most certainly be unable to meet them."

Birotteau, pale and solemn, rose and looked at Popinot, who, frightened at the effect of his words, cried, "I will do it, if you wish!"

"Ingrate!" said the perfumer, gathering all his forces to hurl the word at Anselme.

And then he walked to the door and went out. When Popinot had recovered from the effects of the shock which this terrible accusation produced upon him, he ran down the stairs and out into the street, but the perfumer was nowhere to be seen. For the rest of the day that dreadful word was ringing in the ears of Césarine's lover, and the face of poor César was constantly before his eyes. Like Hamlet, he lived with a frightful ghost forever at his side.

Birotteau wandered about the streets of the neighborhood like a drunken man. He finally found himself on the quay, which he followed, and went as far as Sèvres, where he passed the night in an inn, nearly insensible with grief. His frightened wife dared not send in search of him. On an occasion like this, an alarm imprudently given is fatal; and the wise Constance sacrificed her uneasiness to commercial reputation; but she watched all night long, mingling her prayers with her tears. Could César be dead? Or had he left Paris, on the track of some forlorn hope?

On the next day she behaved as if she knew all about the reasons for his absence; but she summoned her uncle and begged him to go to the morgue, since Birotteau had not returned at five o'clock. During all this time, the courageous woman was at her post behind the counter, her daughter sewing near her; and both of them, with composed countenances, neither sad nor smiling, attended to the wants of customers.

When Pillerault returned, he was ac-

companied by César. He had met him in the Palais-Royal, hesitating whether or no to try the gaming-table. It was now the fourteenth day of the month. At dinner, César could eat nothing. The scene after dinner was most distressing. The merchant experienced, for the hundredth time, one of those frightful alternations of hope and despair which, by raising the soul to the heights of joy and then precipitating it into the depths of grief, soon exhaust a feeble nature.

Derville, Birotteau's lawyer, came during the evening, and entered quickly the splendid salon, where Madame César retained with difficulty her poor husband, who wanted to go to the fifth story, "in order," as he said, "not to see the monuments of his folly."

"The lawsuit is gained," said Derville.

At these words, César's shriveled-up face relaxed, but his joy startled Uncle Pillerault and the lawyer. His wife and daughter hastily left the apartment, to weep unrestrained in Césarine's room.

"Then I shall be able to borrow!" exclaimed the perfumer.

"That would be imprudent," said Derville: "the other side have appealed, and the court may reverse the judgment; but in a month we shall have a decision."

"A month!"

And César fell into a sort of lethargy from which no one attempted to rouse him. This state, in which the body lived and suffered, while the functions of the mind remained inactive, this respite given by chance, was regarded by them all as a favor sent from Heaven. Birotteau was thus able to bear the heartrending emotions of the night.

He was seated in an armchair at one side of the fire. Opposite him was his wife, who watched him attentively, a gentle smile on her lips; one of those smiles which prove that women approach more nearly than men to the angelic nature, since they mingle an infinite tenderness with the most perfect compassion. Césarine was seated on a little stool at her mother's feet, and from time to time laid her head caressingly against her father's hands, expressing thus the sympathy which could not find words.

Seated in an armchair, Pillerault, with a grave, philosophical air, was talking to Derville in a low voice. Constance had thought it best to consult the lawyer, whose discretion was beyond suspicion. Knowing the condition of affairs by heart, she had thoroughly explained the situation to Derville. After a consultation which lasted for an hour, and which was held under the very eyes of the stupefied perfumer, the lawyer looked at Pillerault and shook his head.

"Madame," he said, with the horrible coolness of a man of business, "you will have to make an assignment. Even supposing that by some extraordinary effort you could pay what is due to-morrow, you would have to give up sooner or later; and, in my opinion, it is better to leap out of the window than to be kicked down the staircase."

"That is my opinion also, my child," said Pillerault.

Madame César and Pillerault both accompanied Derville to the door.

"Poor papa," said Césarine, rising softly to press a kiss upon César's forehead. "Could Anselme do nothing?" she asked, as her mother and uncle returned.

"Ingrate!" cried César, in whose mind some chord of remembrance was touched by this name.

From the moment that this accusation had been hurled at him like an anathema, Popinot had not had a moment of sleep nor an instant of peace. He cursed his uncle's advice, and finally went to him, armed with all the eloquence of love.

"Commercially speaking," he began, "custom permits the chief partner to take a certain sum, in anticipation of the profits. Upon examining my affairs, I find that I shall be able to pay forty thousand francs in three months. We know that Monsieur César's honesty makes it certain that these forty thousand francs will be employed in paying his notes; therefore the creditors, if there should be a failure, can have no reason to reproach us. Besides, uncle, I would rather lose

forty thousand francs than lose Césarine. At this very moment she probably knows of my refusal, and thinks badly of me because of it. I have promised to give my blood for my benefactor. I am in the situation of a young sailor who ought to go to the bottom holding his captain's hand, or of the soldier whose duty it is to perish with his general."

"You are generous, but unbusinesslike; but you do not lose my esteem on that account," said the judge, pressing his nephew's hand. "I have thought much on this subject," he continued. "I know that you are deeply in love with Césarine, and I believe that it is possible for you to satisfy both the laws of the heart and the laws of commerce."

"Ah! uncle," exclaimed the young man, "if you have found a way to do that, you have saved my honor."

"Advance fifty thousand francs to Birotteau," resumed the judge, "making a deed of redemption relative to his interest in your oil, which has become the same thing as an article of property. I will draw up the deed for you."

Anselme embraced his uncle, returned to his own house, made out bills for fifty thousand francs, and ran with them from the Rue des Cinq-Diamants to the Place Vendome; and at the very moment when Césarine, her mother and her Uncle Pillerault were looking at the perfumer, surprised at the sepulchral tone in which he had pronounced the word "Ingrate!" in reply to his daughter's question, the door opened and Popinot appeared.

"My dearly beloved benefactor," he said, wiping the perspiration from his brow, "here is what you asked of me;" and he held out the notes. "Yes," he continued, "I have looked into the matter carefully and I shall be able to pay. Do not fear; take them, and save your honor."

"I was sure of him," cried Césarine, seizing Popinot's hand, and pressing it convulsively.

Madame César embraced Popinot, and the perfumer stood up like one of the elect coming forth from a tomb, at the Last Judgment, at the sound of the trumpet. Then he put out his hand frantically to seize the fifty crisp pieces of paper.

"One moment," said Uncle Pillerault, grasping Popinot's notes, "one moment!"

The four people who gazed at him, startled by his manner and accent, stood in horrified silence, without attempting to interfere, while he tore the notes and threw them upon the fire, where they were quickly consumed.

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Sir!"

The four exclamations were uttered as with one voice. Uncle Pillerault put his arm around Popinot's neck, pressed him to his heart and kissed his forehead.

"You are worthy of adoration," he said. "If you loved my daughter, and if she were worth a million and you had only that" (and he pointed to the black cinders upon the fire), "if she loved you, you should marry her in a fortnight. Your master," and he motioned toward César, "is a fool. Nephew," he continued gravely, addressing the perfumer, "no more illusions. Business must be carried on with money and not with sentiment. This is sublime, but useless. I was at the Bourse for two hours, and your credit there is not worth a sou; everybody was talking of your misfortunes, of renewals refused, of attempts with several bankers and of their refusals, of your follies, of six flights mounted to find a landlord, in order to renew twelve hundred francs, of your ball, given to conceal the fact of your embarrassments. They even go so far as to say that you lost nothing by Roguin. According to your enemies, Roguin is nothing but a pretext. One of my friends, charged with learning everything, has confirmed my suspicions. You would try in vain to negotiate those bills of Popinot's; you would meet with humiliating refusals; no one would take them. There is nothing to prove how many of them you have issued, and every one expects that you will sacrifice this poor boy to your own safety. You would simply

destroy the credit of the house of Popinot. Do you know how much the boldest of discounters would venture to advance you on these fifty thousand francs? Only twenty thousand; *twenty thousand,* do you hear? It is of no use. Courage, my poor nephew! You will have to make an assignment. Here is Popinot, and here am I. As soon as your clerks have gone to bed, we will set to work, and save you all the anguish and distress that we can."

"Uncle!" said the perfumer, clasping his hands.

"César," said Pillerault, "do you want to make a dishonorable failure? As it is now, your interest with Popinot will save your honor."

César saw at length in all its extent the frightful truth, and falling back into his chair, he sank from there to his knees; his mind seemed to wander, and his wife, believing that he was dying, knelt beside him to raise him; but she remained motionless, as she saw him clasp his hands, raise his eyes, and repeat with resignation and contrition, in the presence of his uncle, his daughter and Popinot, the sublime prayer known to all Christian nations.

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, *give us our daily bread,* and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Amen."

Tears came to the eyes of even the stoical Pillerault, and Césarine, sobbing, leaned her head upon the shoulder of Popinot, who stood pale and rigid as a statue.

"Let us go down now," said the old merchant to the young man, taking him by the arm.

At half-past eleven they left César to the tender care of his wife and daughter. Just then Celestin, the head clerk, who, during the secret disturbances, had taken the management of affairs, came up to the salon. When she heard him coming, Césarine ran to open the door, in order to prevent him from seeing her father's condition.

"Among this evening's letters," he said, "there was one from Tours, which had been wrongly addressed; that accounts for its delay. Thinking that it was from Monsieur Birotteau's brother, I did not open it."

"Papa," cried Césarine, "here is a letter from my uncle at Tours."

"Ah! I am saved," exclaimed César. "My brother! my brother!" and he kissed the letter, which read as follows:

"TOURS, 17th inst.

"MY DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER: Your letter has caused me the greatest sorrow; as soon as I had read it, I offered up to God the holy sacrifice of mass on your account, begging of Him, by the blood which His son, our divine Redeemer, shed for us, to cast upon your troubles a pitiful glance. At the very moment when I pronounced the words: *Pro meo fratre Cæsare,* my eyes were full of tears as I thought of you, from whom, unfortunately, I am separated just at the time when you need the help of fraternal friendship. But I do not doubt that the worthy and venerable Monsieur Pillerault will take my place. My dear César, do not forget, in the midst of your troubles, that this life is only a life of trials; that one day we will be rewarded for having suffered for the holy name of God, for His holy Church, and for having observed the precepts of the Evangelists and lived a virtuous life; if it were not so, the things of this world would have no meaning. I remind you of these maxims, although I know that you are pious and good, because it often happens that people who, like you, are cast into the storms of the world, and launched upon the perilous sea of human interests, permit themselves to blaspheme in the midst of adversity, carried away as they are by grief. Curse neither the men who offend you, nor the God who, at His own divine will, mingles bitterness with your life. Do not look at this world; on the contrary, lift your eyes to heaven, from whence comes consolation for the feeble, and wealth for the poor."

"But, Birotteau," said his wife, "skip

all that, and see if he has sent us anything."

"We will often read this over," replied the merchant, wiping away his tears, and half opening the letter, from which fell an order upon the royal Treasury.

"I was very sure he would help me, my poor brother," said Birotteau, seizing the order.

"I went to Madame de Listonière," he resumed, reading with a voice broken by tears, "and without telling her the reason for my request, I begged her to lend me all that she could spare, in order that I might add it to the fruit of my economies. Her generosity has enabled me to complete the sum of a thousand francs, for which I send you an order from the receiver-general of Tours on the Treasury."

"That is a fine loan!" exclaimed Constance, looking at Césarine.

"By denying myself certain luxuries," continued the letter, "I shall be able in three years to return to Madame Listonière the four hundred francs which she has lent me; so do not be anxious about them, dear César. I send you all that I possess in the world, hoping that this sum will help to bring to a happy termination your financial embarrassments, which are doubtless only momentary. I know your delicacy, and want to forestall your objections. Do not think of either giving me any interest on this sum, or returning it to me in that time of prosperity which will surely come to you some day, if the Lord deign to listen to my constant prayers in your behalf. After your last letter, which I received two years ago, I believed you to be rich, and decided to dispose of my savings in favor of the poor; but now, all that I have belongs to you. When you have safely sailed past this rough place in your voyage, keep this sum for my niece Césarine, in order that, when she marries, she may purchase some trifle which will remind her of her old uncle who is always praying God to bless her and all those who are dear to her. In short, my dear César, remember me as a poor priest who lives by the grace of God like the birds of the air, walking in my own path quietly, trying to obey the commandments of our divine Saviour, and having few wants. Therefore do not have the least scruple, in the difficult circumstances in which you are placed, at accepting this, and think of me as of one who tenderly loves you. Our excellent Abbe Chapeloud, to whom I have said nothing of your situation, and who is aware that I am writing to you, sends kindest remembrances to you and your family, and wishes you every prosperity.

"Adieu, my dearly-beloved brother. May God grant you good health, you, your wife and your daughter; and may you have all patience and courage in your troubles. FRANCOIS BIROTTEAU,

"Priest, vicar of the cathedral and parish church of Saint Gatien de Tours."

"A thousand francs!" said Madame Birotteau, furious.

"Keep them," said César, gravely, "they are all we have. Besides, they belong to our daughter, and will enable us to live without asking anything of our creditors."

"They will think that you have kept back important sums from them."

"I will show them the letter."

"They will say that it is a forgery."

"My God!" cried Birotteau, terrified. "I have thought that, before now, of poor fellows who were perhaps in my very situation."

Much alarmed at César's condition, the mother and daughter worked in silence near him. About two o'clock in the morning, Popinot softly opened the door of the salon, and beckoned to Madame César to come down. When he saw his niece, Uncle Pillerault took off his spectacles.

"My child," he said, "there is hope; all is not lost; but your husband must make no objections to the negotiations which Anselme and I propose to attempt. Do not leave your shop to-morrow, and take the addresses of all the bills, for we have until four o'clock. Here is my idea. You need fear neither Monsieur Ragon nor myself. Suppose now that your hundred thousand francs which you placed

with Roguin had been sent to the purchasers, you would not have them, any more than you have them to-day. You owe a hundred and forty thousand francs to Claparon, which must be paid. You have, toward this sum, forty thousand francs which you can borrow sooner or later on your buildings, and sixty thousand francs' worth of Popinot's bills. So we will be able to make a fight, for afterward you will be able to borrow on the Madeleine land. If your principal creditor will consent to help you, I will gladly give up my fortune to you. Popinot will have hard work to get along, and as for you, you will be at the mercy of every little commercial wave. But there will doubtless be great profits from the oil. Popinot and I have just had a consultation, and we will help you in this struggle to the best of our power. I will gladly eat dry bread, if only I can see succcss appearing upon the horizon. But everything depends upon Gigonnet, and upon Claparon and his associates. Popinot and I are going to Gigonnet's between seven and eight o'clock, and when we have seen him we shall know what we can do."

Constance was completely overcome; she threw herself into her uncle's arms, and her voice was choked with sobs. Unfortunately, neither Popinot nor Pillerault could know that Bidault was called Gigonnet, that Claparon was merely a cat's-paw for Du Tillet, and that Du Tillet was only too anxious to read in the papers the news of Birotteau's failure.

Anselme and Pillerault pored over César's affairs until daybreak; and at eight o'clock in the morning the two devoted friends went in search of Gigonnet, in the Rue Grenetat.

XXI.

The Rue Grenetat is a street where all the houses, for the most part given up to commerce, offer a repulsive aspect, unsightly and dirty. Gigonnet lived on the third floor of a house whose dilapidated windows had little panes of soiled glass. The staircase went down to the street, and the portress was lodged in a little cage on the entre-sol, which was lighted only from the stairway. With the exception of Gigonnet, all the lodgers had some business or profession. Workmen were continually going and coming, and the steps were perpetually covered with a bed of mud, hard or soft according to the atmosphere, and filled with filth and rubbish. Upon each landing-place the name of the manufacturer occupying the apartments was written upon a red, varnished background in gilt letters, and a sample of his workmanship was displayed. Usually the doors were left open, showing an odd mixture of domestic and shop life, whence escaped cries, noises, songs and whistles, reminding one of the hour of four o'clock among the animals at the Jardin des Plantes.

On the first floor, in a wretched hole of a place, were made the most beautiful suspenders to be found in Paris. On the second, in the midst of filth and dirt, were manufactured some of the most elegant book-bindings which ornament on New Year's Day the book-stalls of the boulevards and of the Palais Royal. Gigonnet was worth eighteen hundred thousand francs, and lived on the third floor of this house, from which no consideration could induce him to depart, not even the offer of his niece, Madame Saillard, to give him rooms in a mansion on the Place Royale.

"Courage!" said Pillerault, pulling the hind's foot which hung by a cord at Gigonnet's door.

Gigonnet himself came to open the door. The two champions of the perfumer, fairly entered into the arena of bankruptcy, passed through a correct and cold-looking antechamber, whose windows were bare and curtainless, and sat down in the second room, where the discounter had been sitting before a fireplace full of cinders, in the midst of which the wood was fighting against the fire. Popinot shivered and felt chilled by the monastic severity and bareness of the room, and looked with a stupefied air at the paper, bluish in background with tri-

colored flowers upon it, which had been pasted upon the walls twenty-five years ago, and from there rested his disheartened gaze upon the chimney-piece, adorned with a clock in the form of a lyre, and oblong vases in Sèvres blue, richly ornamented in gilded bronze. These waifs, picked up by Gigonnet in the shipwreck of Versailles, where the mob broke everything they could lay their hands on, came from the boudoir of the queen ; but these precious vases had for companions two candlesticks of the commonest kind, made of beaten iron, contrasting savagely with their royal neighbors.

"I know that you do not come for yourselves," began Gigonnet, "but for the great Birotteau. Well, what is it, my friends?"

"We will endeavor to be brief," replied Pillerault ; "you have some bills payable to Claparon's order?"

"Yes."

"Will you exchange the first fifty thousand for bills from Monsieur Popinot, of course minus the discount?"

Gigonnet took off his terrible little green cap which seemed a part of him, showing his bare skull of the color of fresh butter, made a Voltairian grimace and said :

"You want to pay me in hair-oil : what do you suppose I should do with it?"

"If you joke about it, I suppose there is nothing more to be said," returned Pillerault.

"You speak like the wise man that you are," replied Gigonnet, with an admiring smile.

"Well! suppose I were to indorse Monsieur Popinot's bills?" said Pillerault, making a last effort.

"You are as good as gold, Monsieur Pillerault," replied Gigonnet; "but I have no use for gold. I prefer my money."

Pillerault and Popinot bowed and went out. As they descended the staircase, Popinot's knees knocked against each other.

"Is that a man?" he asked.

"He pretends to be," said Pillerault. "Anselme, always remember this short interview! You have just seen the banking business without the masquerade of its agreeable forms. Unforeseen events are the screw of the wine-press, we are the grapes, and bankers are the cask. The affair of the land around the Madeleine is doubtless good ; Gigonnet, or some one back of him, wants to destroy César in order to dress himself in his skin ; that is the whole amount of the matter, and he has no redress at all—none."

After a horrible morning, during which, for the first time, Madame Birotteau had taken the addresses of those who came for their money, and had sent the boy from the bank away empty-handed, the courageous woman, who had been happy at being able to save her husband from all this trouble, saw Anselme and Pillerault return at eleven o'clock. She had been awaiting them in the greatest anxiety, and read at once her sentence in their faces ; the assignment was inevitable.

"He will die of grief," said the poor woman.

"I fear it," said Pillerault, gravely ; "it seems to me that his spiritual director, the Abbe Loraux, can help him more than any one else."

Pillerault, Popinot and Constance waited while a clerk went for the Abbe Loraux, before they ventured to break the sad news to César, and to present to him the necessary papers for signature, which Celestin had prepared. The clerks were in despair, for they loved their master. At four o'clock the good priest arrived ; Constance told him all about the trouble which had overtaken them, and he mounted the stairs as a soldier would mount to the breach.

"I know why you have come," cried Birotteau.

"My son," said the priest, "your sentiments of resignation to the divine will have long been known to me ; but now is the time to apply them. Keep your eyes continually upon the cross ; do not cease to gaze upon it, and to meditate upon the humiliations to which the Saviour of men was exposed. Think upon the anguish of His passion, and

you can better support the mortifications which the Lord sends you—"

"My brother the abbe has already prepared me," said César, showing the letter which he had re-read, and which he held out to his confessor.

"You have a good brother," said Monsieur Loraux, "a virtuous and gentle wife, a tender daughter, two stanch friends, your uncle and the dear Anselme, and two indulgent creditors, the Ragons; and they are all anxious to pour balm into your wounds and to aid you to bear your cross. Promise me to bear the blow like a martyr, without flinching."

The abbe coughed to prevent Pillerault, who was in the room, from speaking.

"My resignation is boundless," replied César, calmly. "Dishonor has come, and there is nothing left except to think of reparation."

The voice and manner of the poor perfumer surprised both Césarine and the priest; but nothing was more natural. A defined and acknowledged sorrow is easier to bear than the cruel uncertainties of suspense.

"I have been dreaming for twenty-two years, but I awake to-day to find my peasant's staff in my hand," continued César.

Upon hearing these words, Pillerault clasped his nephew in his arms. And then César perceived his wife, Anselme and Celestin. The papers which the clerk held were very significant; but César looked tranquilly at the group, whose faces were so sad yet so friendly.

"One moment!" he said, and he detached his cross and handed it to the abbe, saying: "Give it back to me when I can wear it without shame. Celestin," he added, "write my resignation as deputy. Monsieur Loraux will dictate the letter to you; you will date it the 14th, and will send it to Monsieur de la Billardière by Raguet."

Celestin and the Abbe Loraux went downstairs, and for the next quarter of an hour a profound silence reigned in the room. Such firmness surprised the family. Celestin and the abbe soon returned, and César signed the resignation; but when the other papers were presented to him, he could not repress a nervous shudder.

"My God, have pity upon me," he said as he signed the terrible documents and handed them to Celestin.

"Monsieur and madame," said Anselme Popinot then, his face lighting up, "will you do me the honor to give me the hand of Mademoiselle Césarine?"

At these words, tears stood in the eyes of all present, with the exception of César, who rose, took Anselme's hand, and said in a hollow voice:

"My child, you shall never marry the daughter of a bankrupt."

Anselme looked earnestly at Birotteau, and then said:

"Monsieur, will you promise me, in the presence of all your family, to consent to our marriage, provided mademoiselle will accept me for a husband, on the day that your debts are all paid?"

There was a moment of silence, during which all present shared in the emotions so visibly painted upon the perfumer's face.

"Yes," he answered, finally.

Anselme made a motion toward taking Césarine's hand; she gave it to him, and he kissed it.

"Do you also consent?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"Then I am one of the family; and as such have the right to take part in its affairs," he said with an odd expression.

Anselme hastily left the house, in order to conceal a joy which contrasted too forcibly with the grief of his master. He did not precisely rejoice at the failure, but love is so egotistical! And Césarine herself felt an emotion in her heart which tended to counteract her intense sadness.

"It will be much better, while we are about it, to finish up this matter," whispered Pillerault to Constance, who nodded mournfully.

"Nephew," said Pillerault, addressing César, "what do you intend to do?"

"To continue the business," replied the perfumer.

"That is not my advice," returned Pillerault. "I have often imagined myself in a position similar to yours, for in busi-

ness one must look on all sides; and the merchant who never gives a thought to failure is like a general who never counted upon being beaten. Well, I have thought it over, often, and for my part, I should never continue in business. What! always to blush before men whom I had wronged, and to endure their suspicious looks and tacit reproaches! It would be worse than the guillotine, for there all is over in an instant. I know that many people take up business again as if nothing had happened. Very well! so much the better for them; they are stronger than Claude Joseph Pillerault. If you deal in ready money, which you have to do, people will say that you knew how to feather your nest. If you are without a sou, you can never succeed. Come! give up your business, sell your stock, and do something else."

"But what?" asked César.

"Well!" said Pillerault, "take some position. You have plenty of patronage, have you not? There are the Duke and Duchess of Lenoncourt, Madame de Mortsauf, and Monsieur de Vandenesse; write to them, or go and see them. They will get you some Government position worth some thousands of écus; your wife will earn as much more, and perhaps your daughter also. Your position is not hopeless. The three of you ought to earn about ten thousand francs a year. In ten years you can pay a hundred thousand francs, for you need spend nothing of what you earn; your wife and daughter will have fifteen hundred francs from me for their expenses, and as for you, we will see!"

After uttering these wise words, Pillerault directed his steps toward the Bourse, at that time located in a temporary building on the Rue Feydeau. The failure of the perfumer was already known, and was the topic of conversation. The liberals saw in Birotteau's grand ball only an audacious enterprise; and the fall of a member of the Government, and an incorrigible royalist, who, on the 13th Vendemiaire, had insulted liberty by fighting against the glorious French Revolution, excited the clamor and applause of the Bourse. Pillerault desired to know the true state of puplic opinion, and therefore joined a group composed of Du Tillet, Gobenheim-Keller, Nucingen, old William Lebas and his son-in-law Joseph, Claparon, Gigonnet, Mongenod, Camusot, Gobseck, Adolphe Keller, Palma, Chiffreville, Matifat, Grindot and Lourdois.

"Just think how careful one has to be!" said Gobenheim to Du Tillet; "it was only by the merest chance that my brothers-in-law did not give credit to Birotteau!"

"For my part, I am out ten thousand francs which he asked of me a fortnight ago, and which I gave him on his simple signature," said Du Tillet. "But I was rather under obligations to him, so I do not regret the loss of the money."

"Your nephew has done what every one else does," said Lourdois to Pillerault, "he has given fêtes. I can understand a rogue's trying to throw dust in people's eyes for the sake of inspiring confidence; but for a man who has always passed for the very soul of honesty to have recourse to such tricks!"

"Put confidence in no man who does not live in a hole of a place, like Claparon," said Gigonnet.

"You wanted to play me a trick," said Baron Nucingen to Du Tillet, "when you sent Birotteau to me.—I do not know," he added, turning to Gobenheim, the manufacturer, "why he did not send to me for fifty thousand francs. I should have let him have them."

"Oh! no, monsieur," said Joseph Lebas. "You must have known that the Bank had refused his paper. There are some singular circumstances connected with the affairs of this poor man, whom I esteem highly."

At these words Pillerault pressed Lebas's hand warmly.

"It is, in truth, impossible to explain what has happened," said Mongenod, "unless we can think that there are, concealed behind Gigonnet, some bankers who want to ruin that affair of the Madeleine."

"There has only happened to him what

always happens to those who dabble in what they do not understand," said Claparon, hastening to interrupt Mongenod. "If he had introduced his Huile Cephalique himself, instead of going into that business of the land around the Madeleine, he might have lost his hundred thousand francs by Roguin, but he would not have failed. He will go to work under the name of Popinot now."

"Then we must look out for Popinot," said Gigonnet.

Roguin was spoken of by most of the merchants as the "unfortunate" Roguin, but the perfumer was "that poor Birotteau."

When Gigonnet left the Bourse, he stopped at Madame Madou's shop, on his way to the Rue Grenetat.

"Well, mother," he said to her, with coarse familiarity, "how is your business getting along?"

"Pretty well," replied the nut-merchant, respectfully, offering her sole armchair to the usurer with affectionate servility.

Madame Madou, who could knock down a refactory wagoner, who had not feared to go to the attack upon the Tuileries on the 10th of October, and who joked and jeered undauntedly at her best customers, received Gigonnet with profound respect.

"Can I do anything for you?" she asked.

"A mere nothing," he replied; "only to hold yourself in readiness to pay Birotteau's notes; the worthy man has failed, and everything is coming due. I will send you the account to-morrow morning."

Madame Madou's eyes first narrowed like those of a cat, and then darted flame.

"The beggar! the knave!" she exclaimed. "He came here himself to tell me that he was deputy-mayor, bragging of his honors! That is the way with business! One cannot put faith even in mayors! But I will get my pay yet!—"

"In these matters, my dear, every one gets out as best he can," returned Gigonnet.

"Well! I will get out," she replied. "Marie Jeanne," she called, "bring me my shoes and my shawl, quickly."

"That is all right," said Gigonnet to himself, rubbing his hands. "Du Tillet will be pleased, for this will make a scandal in the neighborhood. I don't know what this poor devil of a perfumer can have done to him; for my part, I am as sorry for the poor fellow as I would be for a dog with a broken leg. He is not a man; he has no force."

Madame Madou appeared, swooping down, like an insurrection of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, about seven o'clock in the evening, upon the door of the unfortunate Birotteau, which she opened violently, for the walk had not improved her temper.

"Heap of vermin, I want my money—I want my money!" she called out. "Give me my money, or I will help myself to all these fine things here in your cases. Did ever any one see mayors stealing from the people before? If you don't pay me, I will have you sent to the galleys. I will have justice! I shall not stir from this place without my money."

And she made a movement as if to open the glass door of the show-case.

"La Madou is helping herself," said Celestin, in a low voice to the clerk near him.

The infuriated woman overheard him, and, turning upon him, she gave him a vigorous box upon the ear.

"Learn to speak respectfully of those from whom you are stealing," she said.

"Madame," said Constance, coming out of the back shop, where she and her uncle had been endeavoring to assure her husband that there was no necessity for him to carry his humility so far as to deliver himself up to be put in prison; "Madame, for Heaven's sake, do not attract the attention of the passers-by!"

"Let them come in," replied the woman; "I will tell them the whole story. Yes, my merchandise, and my money that I have made by the sweat of my brow, serve to give your fine balls. And you dress yourself like the queen of France, with the wool shorn from poor

lambs like me. My blood boils when I think what thieves you are! I have not much, but what I have is my own! Brigands of robbers, give me my money, or—"

And she seized upon a beautiful box containing toilet articles.

"Let that alone, madame," said César, showing himself. "Everything that is here belongs to my creditors. I have nothing now except my own person, and if you care to seize that, and to put me in prison, I give you my word of honor" (and a tear rolled down his cheek as he spoke) "that I will wait here for your sheriff, and will not attempt to escape."

The tone and gesture harmonized with the words, and somewhat cooled Madame Madou's anger.

"A notary has run off with my money, and I am innocent of the disasters which I cause," resumed César; "but you shall be paid in time, if I have to work like a slave to get the money."

"Come, you are a worthy man," said the market-woman. "Pardon my words, madame; but I shall have to go and drown myself, for Gigonnet is after me, and I have no money to pay your cursed notes with."

"Come to me to-morrow morning," said Pillerault, appearing, "and I will arrange your affair at five per cent, with one of my friends."

"Aha!" she said, "it is the good father Pillerault. Well, you are honest people, and I shall lose nothing, shall I? Good-by until to-morrow," she added, turning to Pillerault.

XXII.

César was determined to remain where he was, saying that he could better explain things to his creditors if he were on the spot, and in spite of the entreaties of his niece, Uncle Pillerault approved of his determination, and made him go up to his own apartments. Then the wily old man hastened to Dr. Haudry's, explained Birotteau's position to him, obtained a sleeping-potion, and returned to pass the evening at his nephew's. With Césarine's help, he induced César to drink with them, and the narcotic soon taking effect upon the perfumer, he awoke twelve hours later to find himself in the bed-chamber of Uncle Pillerault, in the Rue des Bourdonnais, with the good old man asleep on a cot-bed in the salon.

When Constance heard the fiacre drive away, which was bearing her uncle and husband from her, her courage suddenly gave way. Our bravery is often displayed for the sake of some one more feeble than ourselves. The poor woman wept when she was left alone with Césarine, as she would have wept had her husband been dead.

"Mamma," said Césarine, seating herself upon her mother's knee and softly caressing her, "you told me that if I would do my part bravely, you would be strong against adversity. Do not weep any more, then, dear mother, for I am ready to take a situation in some shop, and to forget that we have ever been rich. I will do as you did when you were young; I will be chief young lady clerk, and you shall never hear a complaint nor a regret. I have something to look forward to. Did you not hear Monsieur Popinot?"

"The dear boy will never be a son-in-law to me—"

"Oh! mamma!—"

"He will be my own dear son, instead."

"Misfortune has one redeeming quality," remarked Césarine, wisely, "and that is, it teaches us to know our real friends."

On the morning of the next day, Constance went to the house of the Duke de Lenoncourt, who was one of the first gentlemen of the king's bed-chamber, and left a letter in which she begged an audience with him at a certain hour of that same day. In the meantime she went to Monsieur de la Billardière, explained to him the position in which the flight of the notary had placed her husband, and begged him to take her part with the duke, and to explain the matter to him for her, as she feared that she might not

be able to make herself understood. She desired a position for Birotteau. He would make a thoroughly trustworthy cashier, for instance.

The king had just appointed the Count de Fontaine to a general direction of the administration of his household, and there was no time to lose.

At two o'clock, La Billardière and Madame Constance mounted the grand staircase of the Hotel de Lenoncourt, in the Rue Saint Dominique, and were ushered into the presence of one of the noblemen whom the king preferred, if Louis XVIII. can be said to have had any favorites. The courteous reception of the great man, who belonged to the small number of true noblemen which the last century bequeathed to this one, gave hope to Madame César. The perfumer's wife showed herself both grand and simple in her grief. True grief ennobles even the most vulgar, for it has a grandeur of its own; and Constance's was essentially true.

It was necessary to petition the king promptly.

In the midst of the conference Monsieur de Vandenesse was announced, and the duke exclaimed:

"There is your savior!"

Madame Birotteau was not unknown to the young man, who had been in the habit of coming occasionally to the perfumer's shop in search of the dainty toilet trifles to be found there. The duke explained the intentions of La Billardière, and when he knew of the misfortunes which had fallen upon the god-son of the Marchioness d'Uxelles, Vandenesse went immediately with La Billardière to the Count de Fontaine, requesting Madame Birotteau to wait where she was until their return.

The Count de Fontaine was, like La Billardière, one of the bravest gentlemen who ever came from La Vendée. Birotteau was no stranger to him, for he had met him at the "Reine des Roses." Those who had formerly fought for the royal cause enjoyed now certain privileges which the king bestowed secretly, in order not to offend the liberals.

Monsieur de Fontaine, one of the favorites of Louis XVIII., was reported to be entirely in his confidence; and he not only positively promised a place, but he came to the Duke de Lenoncourt, then on service, to beg of him to obtain him a moment's audience in the evening, and to ask for La Billardière an audience with Monsieur, who particularly liked the old Vendéan statesman.

That same evening, the Count de Fontaine went from the Tuileries to Madame Birotteau's, to tell her that her husband, after he had received his bankrupt's certificate, would be officially nominated to a position worth two thousand five hundred francs.

This success completed only a part of Madame Birotteau's task; and she went next to the Rue Saint Denis, to the sign of the Chat qui pelote, to find Joseph Lebas. On her way she met the gorgeous carriage of Madame Roguin, who had probably been shopping. Their eyes met, and the wealthy woman could not repress a blush of shame as she saw her ruined neighbor, who thought to herself:

"Never would I ride in a carriage purchased with other people's money."

She was kindly received by Joseph Lebas, whom she begged to procure for her daughter a situation in some respectable establishment. Lebas would make no promises, but by the end of the week he had secured a position for Césarine where she had her board, lodging, and a thousand écus a year, in the wealthiest novelty house in Paris, the proprietors of which were about to establish a branch store in the Quartier des Italiens. The charge of the money and the oversight of the shop were intrusted to the perfumer's daughter, who thus had the most responsible position in the establishment, and really took the place of the master and mistress of the house.

As for Madame César, she went on the same day to Popinot, and asked for the position of accountant, cashier and housekeeper; and he, readily comprehending that his house was the only one where the perfumer's wife could find the respect due to her, and could occupy a situation without inferiority, agreed to give her

three thousand francs a year, and her board and lodging. He gave her a room which one of the clerks had been occupying, and thus the beautiful woman, after having enjoyed for one month the luxuries of her new rooms, found herself the inhabitant of the frightful chamber, looking out upon the dark and damp courtyard, where Gaudissart, Anselme and Finot had inaugurated the Huile Cephalique.

When Molineux, who had been appointed agent by the tribunal of commerce, came to take possession of César Birotteau's effects, Constance, aided by Celestin, verified the inventory with him; and then the mother and daughter, on foot and simply dressed, went to their Uncle Pillerault's without even turning their heads to look behind them, although they were leaving the home where they had lived for a third of their lives.

They went in silence to the Rue des Bourdonnais, where they dined with César for the first time since their separation. It was a sad dinner. César had had plenty of time for reflection, for considering the extent of his obligations, and for sounding his courage. All three were like sailors who, while knowing the full extent of their danger, are yet ready to battle with the storm. Birotteau took courage when he heard with what solicitude people of high estate had been arranging his destiny; but he wept when he heard what was to become of his daughter. He pressed his wife's hand as he saw the courage with which she took up work anew, and Uncle Pillerault, for the last time in his life had tears in his eyes as he looked upon the touching tableau; the re-united family clasped in one embrace, in the midst of which Birotteau, the feeblest and most despondent of the three, raised his hand, saying:

"Let us hope!"

"For the sake of economy," said their uncle, "you will lodge with me, use my room, and share my bread. For a long time I have been very tired of living alone, and you will take the place of the poor boy whom I lost. You will not have far to go from here to get to your office."

"By the grace of God," exclaimed Birotteau, "in the midst of the storm, I see a guiding star."

When Birotteau had resigned himself to misfortune, he had reached the limit of disaster. As soon as he had acknowledged the true state of the case to himself, he became strong once more.

After making an assignment, a merchant has nothing more to do except to retire to some oasis either in France or abroad, and abide there quietly, like the child which he is in the eyes of the law; he is declared a minor, and incapable of either legal or civil action. Before he can regain his position, he has to wait for a safe-conduct, which is never refused either by judge or creditor, for if he were without this passport, he could be thrown into prison, while with it he can go about, under a flag of truce, as it were. This condition of civil death, wherein the bankrupt remains like a chrysalis, lasts about three months, the time which is required before the creditors and the debtor can sign a treaty of peace, called a bankrupt's certificate.

When the assignment is made, the tribunal of commerce immediately appoints a commissioner-judge, whose office it is to watch over the interests of the creditors, and also to protect the bankrupt from any harmful proceedings on the part of the irritated creditors. This is a double part which would be most desirable, if the commissioner-judge had the time for it. But he invests an agent of the law with authority to take possession of all properties and merchandise; and at length a meeting of all the creditors is announced, and duly proclaimed in the newspapers. The creditors are expected to assemble, and to name syndics, or temporary assignees, who replace the agent, and step into the bankrupt's shoes, becoming for a time, by a fiction of the law, the bankrupt himself, with power to pay, to sell, and to transact all business, to the profit of the creditors, if the bankrupt make no opposition. Most of the Parisian failures stop at the temporary assignees, and this is the reason:

The nomination of one or more per-

manent syndics is one of the most extreme acts which a creditor who has been played with, mocked, jeered at, deceived, made a fool of, and robbed, can commit. Although creditors usually are robbed, deceived, jeered at, mocked and trifled with, still there does not exist in Paris a commercial ill-will which outlives ninety days. In a negotiation of this kind, the bills of exchange are only payable at three months; and in ninety days all the creditors, wornout by the delays which a failure demands, have become calmed and quiet. This may help a foreigner to understand how in France the temporary is really the permanent; for a thousand temporary syndics, there are not more than five permanent ones. The reason for this renunciation of the ill-will engendered by a failure may be thus comprehended. But it becomes necessary to explain to those who have not the happiness to be merchants, the drama of a bankruptcy, in order to understand the construction of one of the most enormous legal farces of Paris, and also how César's failure was an exception to the general rule.

This beautiful commercial drama has three distinct acts; the act of the agent, the act of the syndics, and the act of the bankrupt-certificate. As in all theatrical pieces, it offers a double spectacle —before the scenes, and behind: as witnessed from the parquet, and from the wings. In the side-scenes are the bankrupt, the syndics, the agent, and the judge. Nobody out of Paris knows, and no one in Paris is ignorant of the fact, that a judge of the tribunal of commerce is the most extraordinary magistrate that a community can create. He may be at any moment overtaken by his own judgments. Before now, Paris has seen the president of its tribunal of commerce obliged to make an assignment. Instead of being a retired merchant, invested with his office as a reward for a life of purity, this judge is a man deeply immersed in commerce; and the *sine quâ non* condition of the election of this magistrate is that he shall have much difficulty in conducting his own business.

The *juge-commissaire* is thus necessarily a person before whom much is said, but who is busily thinking of his own affairs while he listens, and who turns the matter over to the agents, except in certain cases where the thefts appear connected with curious circumstances, and give him the impression that the creditors or the debtor are clever people. He is like a royal bust placed in an audience-chamber, and is generally mute. Let us do justice to the law; the legislation, made in haste, has tied the hands of the judge, and he often agrees to frauds which he has no power to prevent.

The agent, instead of being in the service of the creditors, may become the confidant of the debtor, for each one hopes to feather his own nest with some of the treasures which every bankrupt is supposed to have concealed. Sometimes he makes himself useful to both sides. Often a clever agent has caused judgment to be reversed, by buying up the debts and relieving the merchant, who bounds up again like a rubber ball. The agent turns toward whichever side will give him the most profit, and thus plays the rôle of general utility man in the great comedy.

During this act the creditors present themselves, to appoint the temporary syndics, who are, as has been said, usually the permanent ones also.

In this electoral assembly those to whom fifty sous are due have as much right to vote as those who are creditors for fifty thousand francs. This assembly, into which a bankrupt often introduces false electors, proposes for candidates creditors from whom the judge is obliged to appoint the syndics. Thus, the judge almost always receives from the hand of the bankrupt the syndics which it suits him to have; another abuse which makes this catastrophe one of the most burlesque dramas that justice ever protected. An honorable man, and a landholder, legalizes thus the theft which he had meditated. Generally the smaller tradespeople of Paris are free from all blame; for when one of them fails, he has probably first sold all that he possessed, even

to the shawl off of his wife's back, to prevent the catastrophe.

The law demands that the bankrupt's certificate, which remits to the merchant a part of his debt and allows him to return to mercantile life, shall be voted for by a certain majority. This calls for a clever stroke of diplomacy on the part of bankrupt and syndics, in order to make all conflicting interests agree. The usual maneuver consists in offering premiums to that portion of the creditors who make up the required majority, to be paid by the debtor, besides dividends provided for in the certificate. For this immense fraud there is no remedy; the thirty tribunals of commerce which have succeeded each other have been well aware of the practice, but have not succeeded in annuling the evil.

Another maneuver in common usage consists in creating creditors, just as Du Tillet created a banking-house, and in introducing a certain number of Claparons, under whose skin the bankrupt conceals himself, thus diminishing by so much the dividend of legitimate creditors and creating resources for himself for the future, while managing and controlling the number of votes necessary to obtain his certificate. The legitimate creditors can only rid themselves of these illegal associates by attacking them, and going through a long and wearying legal process, which, after all, may not be successful.

The result of all this is, that the debtor nominates his syndics, verifies his debts, and arranges his certificate to suit himself.

As all the operations in which a bankrupt engages for ten days before his failure may be criminated, some prudent men take care to begin matters with a certain number of creditors to whose interest it is, like that of the bankrupt, to arrive at a prompt settlement. Sharp, quick-witted creditors seek out duller or slower ones, and, painting the failure in the darkest colors, buy from them their claims at half their worth, and recover their money upon the dividend of their own debts, and the half, third or quarter gained upon those purchased.

A bankruptcy is the closing more or less hermetically of a house which, after being pillaged, still contains a few sacks of money. Happy the merchant who can slip out by window, roof, cellar or keyhole, who can seize a sack and increase his own possessions! In this rout, the cry is: *Sauve qui peut!* A man is admired according as he is able to carry off certain property to the detriment of the other creditors.

This frightful commercial tangle is so well appreciated in Paris that every merchant accepts a failure as a sinister fact for which there is no remedy, and puts his share in it down to profit and loss, without being foolish enough to spend his time over the matter; he goes about his own business. As for the petty merchant, with his worries at the end of every month, and his struggles with his daily affairs, a lawsuit which would be tremendous in duration and expensive in its procedure frightens him; he imitates the great merchant, and bows his head submissively to his loss.

Great merchants seldom make an assignment now; they make an amiable compromise, and the creditors are willing to take what is offered them, and give a receipt, avoiding thus the judicial delays and the depreciation of merchandise, as well as the dishonor to the merchant. At present it is the popular belief that a bankruptcy would yield less than a compromise, and as a consequence there are more compromises than failures in Paris.

There are, then, two kinds of failure: the failure of the merchant who wishes to take up his business again, and the failure of the merchant who, when he has fallen into the water, is content to go to the bottom. Pillerault knew the difference well; and, according to him, it was as difficult to come out pure from the first, as rich from the second; therefore he counseled a general abandonment. The law provides that during the duration of this drama the creditors shall furnish a support to the bankrupt and his family, but Pillerault notified the judge that he would provide for the needs of his nephew and niece.

XXIII.

Du Tillot had combined everything in such a way as to make the failure a constant agony for his former master; and this is how he did it. Time is so precious in Paris, that it is customary in cases of bankruptcy for one of the two syndics to do the work, while the other is merely a form. By this means a settlement is more speedily attained, notwithstanding the delays of the law.

Du Tillet desired the commercial death of the perfumer, and the names of the syndics nominated through his influence were very significant to Pillerault. Monsieur Bidault, or Gigonnet, the principal creditor, was to have no active part in the matter; Molineux, the little mischief-making old man who had lost nothing, was to have the settlement of everything. Du Tillet had thrown the noble commercial body to this little jackal to be tormented and devoured. After the meeting at which the creditors had nominated the syndicate, Molineux had gone home "honored," as he said, "by the votes of his fellow-citizens," and happy at having Birotteau in his power, as a child delights in being able to torment an insect. The landlord begged Du Tillet to give him the benefit of his knowledge as to the law of the case, and he bought the Code of Commerce. Luckily, Joseph Lebas, forewarned by Pillerault, had in the first place obtained from the president of the committee a commissioner-judge who was both sagacious and kindly; and thus Gobenheim-Keller, whom Du Tillet had hoped to have, found himself supplanted by Monsieur Camusot, a rich Liberal merchant, the landlord of the house where Pillerault lived, and a man said to be honorable.

One of the most horrible scenes in César's life was his necessary conference with Molineux, a being whom he had regarded as a nobody, but who, by a fiction of the law, had now become César Birotteau himself. He had to go, accompanied by his uncle, to the Cour Batave, mount the six flights of stairs, and enter once more the horrible apartment of the old man, who was now his director, his quasi judge, the representative of the mass of his creditors.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Pillerault, as César uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, uncle!" he replied, "you do not know what manner of man this Molineux is."

"I have seen him for the last fifteen years," said the old man, "at the Café David, playing dominoes in the evening; and therefore I have accompanied you."

Monsieur Molineux was excessively polite to Pillerault, and disdainfully condescending to the bankrupt. The little old man had carefully meditated upon his conduct, studying each shade of it, and preparing his ideas for the meeting.

"What information do you require?" asked Pillerault. "There is no dispute about the debts."

"Oh!" answered Molineux, "the debts are correct; everything is verified. The creditors are all legitimate. But the law, sir, the law! The expenditures of the bankrupt have been out of proportion to his fortune. It is evident that the ball—"

"At which you were present," interrupted Pillerault.

"Cost nearly sixty thousand francs, or that this sum was expended on that occasion; and that the property of the bankrupt did not at that time exceed a hundred and some thousand francs. It is according to law to accuse the bankrupt to the judge extraordinary, under the charge of simple bankruptcy."

"Is that your opinion?" asked Pillerault, seeing the discouragement into which this word cast Birotteau.

"Sir, I make a distinction," said Molineux. "Monsieur Birotteau was a municipal official—"

"You have not sent for us to explain to us that we are to be transferred to police correction?" asked Pillerault. "The whole Café David would laugh this evening at your conduct."

The little old man appeared very much alarmed at the possible opinion of the Café David, and looked at Pillerault with a

startled air. He had reckoned upon seeing Birotteau alone, and had promised himself the pleasure of posing majestically as a sort of Jupiter. He had expected to frighten Birotteau by his prepared menaces, to enjoy his alarms and terrors, and then, by gradually softening, to render his victim forever grateful. But instead of his insect, he had got hold of an old commercial sphinx.

"Sir," he said, "there is nothing to laugh at."

"I beg your pardon," replied Pillerault. "You treat largely with Monsieur Claparon, and you abandon the interests of the mass of creditors, in order to look out for your own sums. Now I, as one of the creditors, can interfere. The judge will be on my side."

"Sir," said Molineux, "I am incorruptible."

"I know it," said Pillerault. "You have only looked out carefully for your own interests. You are cunning; you have acted as you do with your tenants—"

"Oh! monsieur," said the syndic, at once returning to his character of landlord, as the cat metamorphosed into a woman ran after a mouse, "my affair in the Rue Montorgueil is not yet settled. What you might call an incident has occurred. The lodger is the principal one in the house, and he pretends now that, having given a year in advance, and having no more than one year to—" (Here Pillerault threw a glance at César which begged him to pay strict attention.) "And, the year being paid, he can take the furniture out of the place. There is to be a new trial. Truly, I ought to keep my securities until I have had full payment; he may owe me some repairs."

"But," said Pillerault, "the law does not give you security upon the furniture except for the rent."

"And accessories!" said Molineux, well astride of his hobby. "The article of the Code is interpreted by the judgments rendered upon the matter; but there ought to be a change in the legislation upon the matter. I am at present preparing a memoir for his highness the keeper of the seals upon this hiatus in the legislation. The Government ought to occupy itself with the interests of the landlord."

"You are perfectly capable of enlightening the Government," said Pillerault; "but will you tell us how we can enlighten you concerning our affairs."

"I want to know," said Molineux with emphatic authority, "if Monsieur Birotteau has received sums of money from Monsieur Popinot."

"No, sir," said Birotteau.

There followed a discussion upon the interests of Birotteau in the Maison Popinot, from which it appeared that Popinot had the right to be entirely paid for his advances, without entering into the failure for the half of the expenses of the establishment, due from Birotteau. Molineux, thanks to Pillerault's management, returned insensibly to a gentler manner, which showed how much he was influenced by the opinions of the Café David. He finished by attempts at consoling Birotteau, and by inviting him, as well as Pillerault, to share his modest dinner. If the ex-perfumer had come alone, he would perhaps have irritated Molineux, and then the affair would have become envenomed. So that on this occasion, as on so many others, Pillerault acted the part of a guardian angel.

Commercial law imposes a horrible torture upon bankrupts; it requires them to appear in person, with their syndics and their commissioner-judge, before the assembly at which their creditors decide upon their destiny. For some men this ceremony has no terrors; but for a man like César Birotteau there is an agony in the scene only surpassed by the tortures of the damned. Pillerault did all that he could to render this horrible day endurable.

Molineux's proceedings were as follows. The lawsuit relative to the property situated on the Rue du Faubourg du Temple was won in the royal court. The syndics decided to sell the property, and César made no opposition. Du Tillet, who happened to know that the Government intended to construct a canal which should connect Saint Denis with the Upper Seine, passing by the faubourg of the Temple,

bought Birotteau's land for the sum of seventy thousand francs. César's rights in the matter of the Madeleine lands were given up to Monsieur Claparon, on condition that he on his side would abandon all claim upon the half due from Birotteau for the expenses of registration and of contract. The perfumer's interest in the house of Popinot & Co. was sold to the said Popinot for the sum of forty-eight thousand francs. The property of the "Reine des Roses" was bought by Celestin Crevel for fifty-seven thousand francs, with the right to the lease, the stock, the furniture, the proprietorship of the Pâte des Sultanes and the Eau Carminative, and the location for twelve years of the manufactories, the utensils of which were also sold to him. Thus the ready money amounted to a hundred and ninety-five thousand francs, to which the syndics added seventy thousand francs, Birotteau's proportion of the property of the unfortunate Roguin. There were also debts to the amount of four hundred and forty; so that all amounted to more than fifty per cent.

Bankruptcy is like a chemical operation, from which the merchant endeavors to extricate himself with as much increase of bulk as possible. Birotteau, distilled in this crucible, gave a result which made Du Tillet furious; he had looked for a dishonest failure, and he saw a virtuous one instead. He cared nothing for the money which he might get from it, but he would like to have seen the poor bankrupt dishonored, lost and vilified. Instead of that, the creditors, at the general meeting, would probably acquit the perfumer triumphantly.

As Birotteau regained his courage, his uncle, like a wise physician, increased his doses, by initiating him into the operations of bankruptcy. These violent measures were like so many blows. A merchant is always miserable at learning the depreciation in value of things which represent for him so much money and care. The news which César's uncle gave him fairly petrified him.

"Fifty-seven thousand francs for the 'Reine des Roses'!" he exclaimed. "Why, the shop cost ten thousand francs, the living apartments cost forty thousand; the furnishings of the manufactory, the benches and copper kettles cost thirty thousand francs; at fifty per cent the things in the shop are worth ten thousand francs; and the Pâte and the Eau are worth a farm in themselves!"

These jeremiads of poor ruined César disturbed Pillerault but little; he listened to them with the same composure that a horse manifests when he stands out in a shower; but he was alarmed at the mournful silence in which the perfumer listened to his talk about the creditors' meeting. One who understands the vanities and weaknesses common to men in every sphere will readily comprehend the horrible torture which it was to this man to appear as a bankrupt in the palace of commercial justice where he had been a judge; to receive insults there where he had so often received gratitude for services rendered; he, Birotteau, whose inflexible opinions in regard to bankrupts were so well-known in the commercial world of Paris; he, who had said: "A man may still be honest when he makes an assignment, but he comes out of an assembly of creditors a knave." His uncle embraced every favorable opportunity for making him familiar with the idea of appearing before his assembled creditors, as the law demanded; but this obligation nearly killed Birotteau. His mute resignation made a deep impression upon Pillerault, who often, in the night, heard him cry out: "Never! never! I shall die first."

Pillerault, a man strong by reason of the simplicity of his life, was yet able to understand weakness in others. He resolved to spare Birotteau the anguish to which he might succumb in the terrible and inevitable scene of the meeting with his creditors. The meeting was inevitable, for the law upon this point is precise, formal and exacting; and the merchant who refuses to appear may be indicted before the court, and accused of simple bankruptcy. But if the law can force the bankrupt to be present, it has no power to make the creditors appear. An as-

sembly of creditors is an important ceremony only in particular cases; for example, if it is a question of dismissing a rogue and making a contract of union, if there is a dispute between the creditors, or if the bankrupt has need of a doubtful majority. But in most cases, the assembly is merely a formality.

Pillerault went to each creditor, and induced one after another to sign a power of attorney for their agent. Each one, with the exception of Du Tillet, sincerely pitied César after he was down. Each one knew how the perfumer had conducted himself, how regular were his books and how clear and straight his affairs. Molineux, at first agent and then syndic, had found at César's house everything that the poor man possessed, even to the engraving of "Hero and Leander" which Popinot had given him; his personal jewels were there, his pin, his gold buckles and his two watches, which even an honest man would have taken with him without an idea of being wanting in probity. Even Constance's modest jewel-casket was there; and this touching obedience to the law made a deep impression upon the commercial world. Birotteau's enemies held up these circumstances as evidences of stupidity; but sensible people saw them in their true light, as a magnificent exhibition of honesty. Two months after the failure, the opinion at the Bourse had greatly changed. Even the most indifferent confessed that this failure was one of the rarest commercial curiosities which had ever been known. And therefore the creditors, knowing that they were to get about sixty per cent, agreed to everything that Pillerault wanted; and as a result, he succeeded in reducing this formidable assembly to three agents or substitutes, besides himself, Ragon, the two syndics and the commissioner-judge. And upon the morning of the solemn day, he had the happiness of being able to say to his nephew:

"César, you can go without fear to your meeting to-day; there will be no one there."

Monsieur Ragon wished to accompany his debtor. When the perfumer heard his little dry voice he grew pale; but the good little old man opened his arms, and Birotteau threw himself into them, as a child would cast himself into the arms of his father, and the two mingled their tears. So much sympathy gave the bankrupt new courage, and he entered the carriage with his uncle. At precisely half-past ten they entered the cloister Saint Merri, where the tribunal of commerce was then held. At that hour there was no one in the bankrupt's hall. The agents, on behalf of their clients, were there, and there was nothing to intimidate César Birotteau. However, when the poor man entered the office of Monsieur Camusot, which had also been his own, he was deeply moved; and he shivered as he passed into the bankrupt's hall.

"It is cold," said Monsieur Camusot to Birotteau, "and these gentlemen will not be sorry to stay here instead of freezing out there in the hall. Sit down, gentlemen."

They each one took a seat, and the judge gave his own armchair to the embarrassed Birotteau. The agents and the syndics signed.

"Because of the abandonment of your property," said Camusot to Birotteau, "your creditors unanimously remit you from the rest of your debts, and your certificate is couched in terms which ought to lessen your grief; you are free. All the judges of the tribunal, my dear Monsieur Birotteau," he added, taking his hands, "sympathize with your position without being surprised at your courage, and there is no one who does not recognize and appreciate your honesty. In your misfortune you have been worthy of the position which you occupied here. I have been engaged in commerce for twenty years, and this is only the second time that I have ever seen a fallen merchant winning an increase of public esteem."

Birotteau took the judge's hands and pressed them, while tears stood in his eyes. Camusot asked him what he intended to do, and he replied that he

intended to work, and to pay his creditors all that he owed them.

"If you need a few thousand francs in order to accomplish this noble task," said Camusot, "you will always find them ready for you here. I would give them with pleasure, for the sake of being a witness to an occurrence so rare in Paris."

And then Pillerault, Ragon and Birotteau took their leave.

"Well, that was not so bad," sail Pillerault to his nephew, at the door of the tribunal.

"I must thank you for this, uncle," said the poor man, with emotion.

"Now you are on your feet once more," said Ragon; "and here we are, not two steps from the Rue des Cinq-Diamants; let us go and see my nephew."

It was with a sharp pang of suffering that Birotteau saw Constance seated before a little desk in a small dark office in the *entre-sol*, above the shop; an office made darker yet by a sign which covered a third of the window, and upon which was written: A. Popinot.

"Here is one of Alexander's lieutenants," said Birotteau, with a forced gayety which struck a chill to his uncle's heart, pointing to the sign.

Constance sent some letters down for Popinot to sign, and as César saw her, he could neither restrain his tears, nor prevent himself from growing pale.

"Good-morning, my dear," she said to him, with a happy face.

"I need not ask you if you are comfortable here," said César, looking at Popinot.

"As I would be with my own son," she replied, with a tender manner which her husband noticed.

Birotteau took Popinot affectionately by the hand, saying:

"I have just lost forever the right to call him my son."

"Let us hope," said Popinot. "Your oil is getting on finely, thanks to my efforts in the journals, and Gaudissart's abroad. He has traveled throughout France, which he has flooded with handbills and prospectuses, and now he is having German prospectuses printed at Strasbourg, with which he proposes to invade Germany. We have placed three thousand gross."

"Three thousand gross!" exclaimed César.

"And I have bought, in the Faubourg Saint Marceau, a piece of ground, which I got at no great expense, and where I am having a manufactory built. I shall still keep the one in the Faubourg du Temple."

"My dear," whispered Birotteau to his wife, "with a little help, we shall pull through yet."

From that day César, his wife and his daughter understood each other, and were agreed upon the main object of Birotteau's present life, namely, the payment in full of his debts. United by the bond of intense honesty, they became like misers, and denied themselves everything; even a liard seemed sacred to them. Césarine became devoted to her business, and proved to have an innate genius for it, working nights, and doing everything in her power to increase the prosperity of the house. Her employers were obliged to restrain her ardor, and tried to recompense her by presents; but she refused the jewels and ornaments which they offered her, and her cry was always "Money!" Each month she brought her earnings to Uncle Pillerault, as did also César and Constance, and he invested them according to his best judgment, taking a portion to the Bourse, where he was ably seconded by Jules Desmarets and Joseph Lebas, who were only too eager to tell him of safe investments.

Birotteau, who lived with his uncle, dared not question him concerning the employment of the sums earned by himself, his wife and child. He went through the streets with his head down, like a man who is completely crushed, and even reproached himself for wearing respectable clothes.

"At least," he said, with a grateful look at his uncle, "I do not eat the bread of my creditors. Your bread seems sweet to me, although given out of charity, for,

thanks to your holy pity, I can save everything toward my debts."

He no longer looked like Birotteau the perfumer; his face was mournful and cast down, and he could not hold up his head with his old air of conscious respectability. Bankrupts are not allowed to present themselves at the Bourse, and César, turned out of the domain of probity, for fourteen months refused all recreation, even the invitations of the Ragons, the Lebases, the Matifats, and even of Monsieur Vauquelin himself, all of whom were eager to honor in César the superior virtue which he displayed. He preferred being in his room by himself to encountering the glance of any creditor, and the most cordial civilities and attentions of his friends only served to remind him of his position.

Constance and Césarine also went nowhere. On Sundays and holidays, the only times when they were at liberty, they called for César at the hour of mass, and returned with him afterward to spend the remainder of the day. Pillerault often invited the Abbe Loraux, whose counsels cheered and sustained César in his life of trials, and they spent many quiet hours together thus.

XXIV.

In the month of May, 1820, the perfumer's family were rewarded for their efforts by a fête which the arbiter of their destinies arranged for them. The last Sunday in the month was the anniversary of Constance's betrothal to César, and Pillerault, with the Ragons, had engaged a small country-house at Sceaux, where they might have a little reunion of their friends.

"César," said Pillerault to his nephew on Saturday evening, "to-morrow we are going to the country, and you are coming, too."

César, whose handwriting was uncommonly fine, was in the habit of copying papers for Derville and other lawyers in the evening; and on Sundays, having received permission from his clergyman, he worked like a slave.

"No," he replied, "Monsieur Derville expects a paper which I am to do."

"Your wife and daughter deserve a reward," replied Pillerault. "You will only meet our friends; the Abbe Loraux, the Ragons, and Popinot and his uncle. Besides, I wish it."

After which, there was nothing more to be said.

César and his wife had never found time to revisit Sceaux, although they had often longed to return there and seek out the particular tree under which the head clerk of the "Reine des Roses" had nearly fainted away. During the little journey, which César made in a hackney-coach with his wife and daughter, and Popinot, Constance was unable by her loving glances to bring a smile to her husband's lips. When she whispered a few words in his ear, he only shook his head for reply. Her efforts, instead of brightening César's face, only seemed to make it more gloomy, and tears which he in vain tried to repress sprang to his eyes. The poor man had come over this same road just twenty years before, rich, young, full of hope, and in love with a young girl who was as beautiful then as Césarine was now; instead of the dreams of happiness in which he had then indulged, he saw now before him his noble daughter pale with sleepless nights, and his courageous wife with all her beauty gone, like a city over which the waves of a volcanic eruption have passed. Love alone remained.

César's mournful appearance stifled the joy in the hearts of his daughter and Anselme, who represented to him the charming scene of long ago.

"Be happy, my children," said the poor father to them, in touching tones. "You have the right to be. You can love each other without any sorrowful thoughts of the past."

Birotteau, as he said these words, took his wife's hands and kissed them with a holy and adoring affection which touched Constance more deeply than the utmost cheerfulness would have done.

When they arrived at the house where their friends were waiting to receive them, these good people, by their manner and words, succeeded in putting César at his ease, for they were all moved at seeing this man so broken down by misfortune.

"Go and walk in the Bois d'Aulnay," said Uncle Pillerault; "go with Anselme and Césarine. Come back again at four o'clock."

"Poor people, our presence disturbs them," said Madame Ragon, softened by the unaffected melancholy of her debtor; "but he will be happy soon."

"His is repentance without guilt," said the Abbe Loraux.

The great secret of strong and creative natures is to forget; to forget, as Nature forgets, remembering nothing of the past, and beginning again each hour the mysteries of its untiring childhood. Feeble natures, like Birotteau's, live upon their sorrows, instead of converting them into the apothegms of experience; they become permeated with them, as it were, and exhausted by their never-ending intensity. When the two couples had gained the little path which leads to the Bois d'Aulnay, placed like a crown upon one of the prettiest hills in the neighborhood of Paris, from which the Vallée aux Loups shows itself in all its coquettishness, the beauty of the day, the grace of the scenery, the spring verdure, and the delicious reminiscences of the happiest day of his youth, relaxed the chords which had so sadly vibrated in César's heart, and he pressed closely his wife's arm, while his eye was no longer glassy and hollow, for the light of pleasure sparkled there.

"At last," said Constance, "I see yourself again, my poor César. It seems to me that we deserve a little pleasure from time to time."

"And can I take it?" said the poor man. "Ah! Constance, your affection is the only thing which I now possess. Yes, I have lost everything, even to my confidence in myself; I have no more force, and my sole desire is to live long enough to clear myself from debt, and to die owing no man anything. You, my dear wife, you who are my wisdom and my prudence, you who see clearly, and who are irreproachable, you can enjoy yourself; I alone am guilty. Eighteen months ago, in the midst of that fatal ball, I saw my Constance, the only woman whom I ever loved, more beautiful even than the young girl with whom I walked in this very path twenty years ago. And in twenty months I have destroyed that beauty;—my pride, my just and lawful pride. I love you better as I know you better. Oh! *darling!*" he added, giving the word an intonation which moved his wife's very soul, "I would rather hear you scold me than see you caressing me in my misfortune."

"I did not think it possible," she returned, "that after twenty years of married life a woman's love for her husband could increase."

These words made César for a moment forget all his unhappiness, for his heart was so sensitive that the words were a fortune to him. He therefore went forward almost joyously toward *their* tree, which happened to be still standing. They sat down, and looked at Anselme and Césarine, who were walking back and forth without perceiving them, probably thinking that they had not yet come up.

"Mademoiselle," said Anselme, "I hope you do not think me cowardly and greedy enough to have profited by the acquisition of your father's share in the Huile Cephalique? I carefully save his portion for him, and take care of it; and if there are any doubtful notes, I take them for my part. We cannot belong to each other until after your father has paid all his debts, and I shall do everything in my power to hasten that day, with all the strength which love gives."

"And will that be soon?" she asked.

"Very soon," replied Popinot.

This was said in such a meaning tone that Césarine raised her forehead to her lover, who imprinted upon it an eager and respectful kiss.

"Papa," she said to César, "everything is going well. Be happy, talk, and put away that sad manner."

When they entered the house, César, although naturally unobservant, could not help noticing a change in the manner of the Ragons which denoted some event. Madame Ragon's manner was particularly gracious, and her look and accent seemed to say to César: "We are paid."

At dessert, the notary of Sceaux was announced, and seating himself, at Pillerault's invitation, he looked at Birotteau, who began to suspect a surprise of some sort, though he could not divine its nature.

"Nephew," began Uncle Pillerault, "during the last eighteen months the savings of yourself, your wife and your daughter have amounted to twenty thousand francs. I have received thirty thousand francs as the dividend of my own debt, and there are therefore fifty thousand francs for your other creditors. M. Ragon has received thirty thousand francs for his dividend, and the notary of Sceaux has brought you a receipt for payment in full, including interest. The remainder of the sum is at Crottat's, for Lourdois, La Madou, the mason, the carpenter, and those others of your creditors who are most importunate. Next year, we will see. With time and patience, a great deal can be done."

Birotteau's joy cannot be described; he threw himself, weeping, into his uncle's arms.

"Let him wear his cross to-day," said Ragon to the Abbe Loraux.

The confessor attached the red ribbon to César's buttonhole, and he looked at himself twenty times during the evening, in the mirrors of the apartment, with a pleasure which might have amused people who deem themselves superior, but which these good friends thought perfectly natural.

On the following day, Birotteau went to see Madame Madou.

"Ah! there you are," she said to him; "I did not know you, you have grown so gray. But you are all right; you have a position. I am not so well off."

"But, madame—"

"Oh! I did not mean that for a reproach," she said; "you have your certificate."

"I have come to tell you," replied César, "that I will pay you, at the house of Monsieur Crottat, notary, to-day, the remainder of your debt, with interest."

"Is that so?" she exclaimed.

"Be at his house at half-past eleven—"

"Well, this is honorable! good measure, and running over," she said, with naïve admiration. "But, see here, my dear sir! I have done a good little business with your rouge; one can make a profit on it without cheating on the price; well! I will give you a receipt, and you can keep your money, poor old man. Mother Madou is quarrelsome, but she has a heart."

"No!" replied Birotteau; "the law is exact, and I want to pay you in full."

"Well, we will not quarrel about it," she said, "and to-morrow, in the market, I will tell of your honesty. Ah! it is something unusual!"

Birotteau went through the same scene, with variations, with the house-painter, who was Crottat's father-in-law. It rained, and César left his umbrella beside the door. The painter, upon seeing a rivulet of water making its way into the fine room where he and his wife were breakfasting, was not very amiable.

"Well, what do you want, my poor Birotteau?" he asked, in the short tone which he might have used to an importunate beggar.

"Then your son-in-law has not told you," began Birotteau.

"What?" asked Lourdois impatiently, expecting some request.

"To go to him this morning, at half-past eleven, to give me a receipt for the payment in full of your debt?"

"Ah! that is a very different thing," said the painter, with a change of voice. "Sit down, Monsieur Birotteau, and have some breakfast with us."

"Give us the pleasure of your company," added Madame Lourdois.

"Is everything settled?" asked the painter.

"No, sir," replied Birotteau, "but with

time I hope to repair the injuries which I have done my neighbors."

"Really," said the painter, swallowing a tart of *pâte de foie gras*, "you are a man of honor."

"And what is Madame Birotteau doing?" asked Madame Lourdois.

"She is book-keeper and cashier for Monsieur Anselme Popinot."

"Poor people!" said Madame Lourdois, in a low voice, to her husband.

"If I can do anything for you, my dear Monsieur Birotteau," said Lourdois, "do not hesitate to come to me. Perhaps I might help you—"

"I only ask you to be present at eleven o'clock," replied Birotteau, as he took his leave.

"This taste of success gave courage to the bankrupt, but did not restore peace to his mind; the desire to regain his honor agitated his life unspeakably; he entirely lost the ruddy color from his cheeks, his eyes grew dull and his face wrinkled. When old acquaintances chanced to meet César at eight o'clock in the morning, or four o'clock in the afternoon, on his way to or from the Rue de l'Oratoire, clad in the coat which he had worn at the time of his fall, and which he wore as carefully as a poor sub-lieutenant wears his uniform, his hair entirely white, and his face pale and timid, they sometimes stopped him in spite of his efforts to avoid them; for he would glide along by the wall like a thief.

"We know of your conduct, my friend," they would say. "Every one regrets the severity with which you treat yourself, as well as your wife and daughter."

"Take a little more time," said others. "The disease of money is not mortal."

"No, but the disease of the soul is," the poor enfeebled César replied to Matifat one day.

In the beginning of the year 1822, the Canal Saint Martin was decided upon, and the property situated in the Faubourg du Temple became of fabulous value. The route of the canal went directly through Du Tillet's property, which was formerly that of César Birotteau. The company agreed to an exorbitant price if the banker would give up the property by a certain time. The lease granted by César to Popinot, however, stood in Du Tillet's way, and he went to the Rue des Cinq-Diamants in search of the druggist.

Popinot felt for Du Tillet an instinctive hatred. He knew nothing about the theft, and the infamous combinations of which the banker had been guilty, but an inner voice cried to him: "This man is an unpunished thief." Although he had had no transactions with Du Tillet, the man's presence was odious to him; and at this very time he beheld Du Tillet growing rich upon the spoils of his old master, for the property near the Madeleine had already begun to rise in value at a rate which foreshadowed the enormous prices which it reached in 1827. Therefore, when the banker had explained the object of his visit, Popinot looked at him with concentrated indignation.

"I will not refuse you my lease," he said, "but I must have sixty thousand francs for it, and not a sou less."

"Sixty thousand francs!" exclaimed Du Tillet, making a movement as if to go.

"I have still fifteen years of the lease," continued Popinot; "I should have to spend three thousand francs or more a year, to replace the manufactory. Therefore, sixty thousand francs, or we say no more about it;" and Popinot re-entered his shop, followed by Du Tillet.

The discussion grew heated, and when Birotteau's name was pronounced Madame César came down to the shop, and saw Du Tillet for the first time since the famous ball. The banker could not repress a start of surprise at her changed appearance, and lowered his eyes before the evidences of his own work.

"This gentleman," said Popinot to her, "receives from *your* property three hundred thousand francs, and he refuses us sixty thousand francs of indemnity for our lease."

"Three thousand francs of income," said Du Tillet with emphasis.

"Three thousand francs!" repeated Madame César, in a simple yet significant tone.

Du Tillet paled. Popinot looked at Madame Birotteau. There was a moment of profound silence, which rendered this scene yet more inexplicable to Anselme.

"Sign this resignation of your lease, which Crottat drew up for me," said Du Tillet, at last, drawing a crisp paper from his side pocket, "and I will give you an order on the Bank for sixty thousand francs."

Popinot looked at Madame César without concealing his profound astonishment; he could not believe his ears. While Du Tillet was signing his order at one of the high desks, Constance disappeared and went upstairs again. The druggist and the banker exchanged papers, and Du Tillet, bowing coldly, left the shop.

"Well, in a few months," said Popinot, watching Du Tillet as he went toward the Rue des Lombards where his cabriolet was waiting, "thanks to this singular affair, I shall have my Césarine. My poor little wife shall no longer wear herself out with work. What! a single look from Madame César was all that was necessary! What can there be between her and this fellow? That was a very extraordinary scene which just took place."

Popinot sent the order to the Bank, and then went upstairs to talk with Madame Birotteau; but she was not at her desk, therefore she was doubtless in her own room. He sought her there, and coming upon her unexpectedly was much surprised to find her reading a letter from Du Tillet, whose writing he recognized. A lighted candle, and the charred fragments of some letters scattered on the floor made Popinot shiver; for, endowed with piercing eye-sight he had involuntarily read the phrase at the beginning of the letter which his future mother-in-law held:

"I adore you! you know it, angel of my life, and why—"

"What influence can you have over Du Tillet, to induce him to conclude an affair like that?" he asked, with a laugh which he vainly sought to render unconstrained.

"Don't let us speak of that," she said, with a deeply troubled look.

"Let us speak of the end of your misfortunes, then," said Popinot, surprised at her manner. He turned on his heel, and drummed with his fingers upon the window-pane, as he thought:

"Well, even if she has loved Du Tillet, it is none of my business."

"What is the matter with you, my child?" asked the poor woman.

"The net profits from the Huile Cephalique amount to two hundred and forty-two thousand francs, and half of that is a hundred and twenty-one," said Popinot, abruptly. "If I deduct from this sum the forty-eight thousand francs given to Monsieur Birotteau, there will remain seventy-three thousand, and that, added to the sixty thousand francs just received for the lease, gives you a hundred and thirty-three thousand francs."

Madame César listened with an intensity of happiness which made her heart beat so violently that Popinot could hear its pulsations.

"I have always considered Monsieur Birotteau to be my partner," he continued, "and we can dispose of this sum to pay his creditors. By adding to it the twenty-eight thousand francs which you have saved, we have a hundred and sixty-one thousand francs. Our uncle will not refuse us a receipt for his twenty-five thousand francs. No power on earth can prevent me from lending to my father-in-law, upon next year's profits, the amount necessary to cover the sums due to his creditors. And—then—everything—will—be—paid!"

"Everything!" cried Madame César, falling upon her knees; and she clasped her hands, repeated a prayer, and made the sign of the cross.

"Dear Anselme," she said then, "dear boy!" and she kissed his forehead and pressed him to her heart almost wildly."

"Césarine is indeed yours," she said; "and she will be a happy girl. She will leave that place where she is killing herself."

"For love," said Popinot.

"Yes," replied the mother, smiling.

"Listen to a little secret," said Popinot, looking at the mysterious letter out of the corner of his eye. "I was able to give Celestin some assistance when he

bought your property, but I did it on one condition. Your apartment is exactly as you left it. I hoped, but I dared not believe, that chance would so favor us. Celestin is pledged to sub-let your old apartment to you, and I have reserved the second story for a home for Césarine and myself. After my marriage I shall live there, and only come here through the day. To give you something to live on, I shall buy out Monsieur César's interest in the business for a hundred thousand francs, and with that, and his position, you will have an income of ten thousand francs. Will you not be happy?"

"Say no more, Anselme, I cannot bear it," she cried.

The angelic attitude of Madame César, the purity of her eyes, and the innocence of her beautiful forehead, gave such a magnificent denial to the thousand ideas which were whirling in the young man's brain, that he longed to put an end to his horrible suspicions. He felt that wrong-doing was irreconcilable with the life and sentiments of Pillerault's niece.

"My dear, adored mother," said he, "in spite of myself a horrible suspicion has entered my mind. If you want to make me happy you will destroy it at once;" and he put out his hand and took the letter.

"Unintentionally," he went on, startled at the terror depicted upon Constance's face, "I read the first words of this letter, which was written by Du Tillet. The words coincide so singularly with the effect which you produced upon the man just now, inducing him, as you did, to agree so promptly to my exorbitant exactions, that no man could help explaining it as the devil himself explains it to me. Your glance, and three words, were sufficient—"

"Do not finish!" said Madame César, taking the letter again, and burning it before Anselme's eyes. "My child, I am cruelly punished for a very slight fault. I will tell you everything, Anselme. I would not have any harm come to the daughter through a suspicion inspired by the mother; and besides, there is nothing for which I need blush; I should say to my husband what I say to you now. Du Tillet at one time became exceedingly attentive to me; my husband was immediately informed of it, and Du Tillet was sent away. On the very day that my husband intended to discharge him, he stole three thousand francs from us!"

"I thought as much!" said Popinot, his tone expressing all the hatred which he felt.

"Anselme," she continued, "your future and your happiness demand this confidence; but it must be buried in your own heart, as it is in mine and in César's. You cannot fail to remember how an error in the cash account always disturbed my husband. Monsieur Birotteau, to escape a lawsuit, and for the sake of saving this man, must have put back again into the safe the three thousand francs, the price of this cashmere shawl which I had three years later. Now you know the reason for my exclamation. Alas! my dear boy, I will confess my childishness to you; Du Tillet wrote me three love-letters, which painted him so well that I kept them—as curiosities. I have not read them over more than once. But it was imprudent to preserve them. The sight of Du Tillet reminded me of them, and I came up here to burn them. I was just looking at the last one when you came in. That is all, my son."

Anselme knelt and kissed Mme. César's hand, and the eyes of both were filled with tears. Then Constance raised the young man, and putting her arms around him, pressed him to her heart.

XXV.

This day was a joyful one for César. The king's private secretary, Monsieur de Vandenesse, came to his office to speak with him.

"Monsieur Birotteau," he said, "your efforts to pay your creditors have accidentally become known to the king; and his majesty, touched by such unusual conduct, and knowing that your humility

has forbidden you to wear the order of the Legion of Honor, has sent me to command you to resume the insignia. Besides this, desiring to help you to fulfill your obligations, he has commissioned me to give to you this sum, from his private purse, regretting that he cannot do more for you at present. Let this remain a profound secret, if you please. His majesty does not believe in letting his good works be known," the private secretary added, handing six thousand francs to César, whose emotions were inexpressible; he stammered a few incoherent words of thanks, and Vandenesse, smiling, shook hands with him and went away.

The principles which animated poor César were so rarely met with in Paris, that his life, unknown to himself, had excited universal admiration. Joseph Lebas, Judge Popinot, Camusot, the Abbé Loraux, Ragon, the proprietor of the important mercantile house in which Césarine was employed, Lourdois, and Monsieur de la Billardière had all spoken of it. Public opinion, already changed, extolled him to the skies.

"There is a man of honor!"

These words had already several times reached César's ears as he walked along the street, and gave him the same thrill which an author feels when he hears some one whisper: "There he is!" This popularity of César's was death to Du Tillet. César's first thought upon receiving the banknotes from his sovereign was to employ them in paying his former clerk. He accordingly went to the Rue Chaussée d'Antin, and encountered Du Tillet upon the staircase.

"Well! my poor Birotteau!" he said, patronizingly.

"Poor!" echoed the debtor, proudly. "I am rich, on the contrary. I can put my head on my pillow to-night, happy in the satisfaction of knowing that I have paid you."

These words were torture to Du Tillet; a voice within him that would not be silenced cried: "The man is sublime!"

"Pay me!" he said. "Are you in business now, then?"

Sure that Du Tillet would not repeat his confidence, César said:

"I shall never go into business again, sir. No human power can foresee what might happen to me. Who knows if I might not fall a victim to another Roguin? But my conduct having come to the knowledge of the king, he has deigned to have compassion upon my efforts, and has encouraged them by immediately sending me a sum large enough to—"

"Do you want a receipt?" asked Du Tillet, interrupting him. "Do you pay—"

"In full, with interest," said César. "And I will ask you to come with me a few steps from here, to Monsieur Crottat's."

"Before a notary!" exclaimed Du Tillet.

"You know," said César, "that I hope in time to pay everything; and if all the payments are authenticated, there can be no trouble."

"Come, let us go, then," said Du Tillet, going out with him; "it is only a step from here. But where did you borrow so much money?" he asked.

"I do not borrow it," said César. "I earn it by the sweat of my brow."

"You owe an enormous sum to Claparon."

"Alas! yes. That is my largest debt; it almost kills me to think of it."

"You will never be able to pay it," said Du Tillet, cruelly.

"He is right," thought Birotteau.

The poor man on his way home inadvertently went through the Rue Saint Honoré; he usually made a detour in order not to see his shop and the windows of his former home. For the first time since his fall he saw the house where the remembrance of eighteen years of happiness had been effaced by the anguish of three months.

"I had hoped to end my days there," he thought; and he hastened his steps, for he had caught sight of the new sign:

"Celestin Crevel, Successor to César Birotteau."

"My sight must be failing. Can that be Césarine?" he exclaimed to himself, seeing a blond head at the window.

It was in fact his daughter, his wife, and Popinot. The lovers knew that Birotteau never walked past his former shop, and they had come there to make arrangements for the fête which they proposed giving to César. This extraordinary apparition so astonished Birotteau that he remained as if transfixed before the house.

"There is Monsieur Birotteau, looking at his old home," said Molineux to the merchant who had his shop across the street from the "Reine des Roses."

"Poor man," said the perfumer's old neighbor; "he gave a beautiful ball there; there were two hundred carriages."

"I was there. He failed three months afterward," said Molineux. "I was syndic."

Birotteau hastened away, with trembling limbs, and hurried to his Uncle Pillerault's.

Pillerault, who had been informed of what had passed in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants, feared that his nephew could with difficulty bear the shock of the great joy which the certainty of being able to pay his debts would give him, for he was a daily witness of the struggles of the poor man, who had such inflexible ideas on the subject of bankruptcy, and who worked to the utmost of his strength, to pay his debts. Honor was to César like a dead thing which yet might possibly have a resurrection; and this hope rendered his trouble incessantly active.

Pillerault took it upon himself to prepare his nephew for the reception of the good news, and when Birotteau entered the house, the good old man was meditating upon the best means of arriving at this end. The joy with which César told of the manifestation of interest which the king had given him, appeared to Pillerault to be a good omen, and the surprise of having seen Césarine at the "Reine des Roses" was an excellent introduction to the subject.

"Well, César," said Pillerault, "do you know to what you owe all this? To Popinot's impatience to marry Césarine. You ought not to prevent the marriage any longer. Popinot wants to give you money enough to pay all your debts."

"He wants to buy his wife," said Birotteau.

"Is it not honorable to try and reinstate his father-in-law?"

"But there might be room for dispute in such a case. Besides—"

"Besides," repeated his uncle, feigning anger, "you may have the right to sacrifice yourself, but you have no right to sacrifice your daughter."

An animated discussion ensued, in which Pillerault purposely grew more and more heated.

"Well," he exclaimed at length, "suppose that Popinot lent you nothing; that he looked upon you as his partner, that he considered the price paid to your creditors as only an advance upon your share of the profits of the Huile Cephalique—"

"Then," replied Birotteau, "I should appear, in connection with him, to have been deceiving my creditors."

Pillerault pretended to be satisfied with this reason. He knew very well that during the night his nephew would have many a discussion with himself upon the matter, and that this inward conflict would gradually accustom him to the idea of his freedom from debt.

"But," Birotteau asked, as he was eating his dinner, "why were my wife and daughter in our old home?"

"Anselme wants to hire it, in order to live there with Césarine," replied his uncle. "Your wife knows their plans. Without saying anything to you about it, they have had the banns published, in order to force you to consent. Popinot says that there would be no merit in his marrying Césarine after your debts were all paid. You accept six thousand francs from the king, but you will not accept anything from your relatives! If I should give you a receipt for what is coming to me, should you refuse it?"

"No," said César, "but that would not prevent me from saving every sou until I had paid you, in spite of the receipt."

"That is all subtilty," said Pillerault, "and upon matters of honesty I think I

may be considered good authority. What nonsense were you talking just now? would you be deceiving your creditors, if you had paid them everything?"

At that, César looked up at his uncle, and Pillerault was moved at seeing, for the first time in three years, a smile upon the saddened features of his poor nephew.

"That is true," he said; "they would be paid. But it would be selling my daughter!"

"And I want to be bought!" cried Césarine, suddenly appearing with Popinot.

The two lovers had heard these last words as they entered the adjoining room on tip-toe, followed by Madame Birotteau. They had all three been in a carriage to the houses of the remaining creditors, to summon them to appear at Alexander Crottat's that evening, where the receipts were being prepared. The powerful logic of the enamored Popinot triumphed over César's scruples, although he persisted in calling himself a debtor, and a defrauder of the law. But he yielded when Popinot exclaimed:

"Do you want to kill your daughter, then?"

"Kill my daughter! repeated César, bewildered.

"Well!" said Popinot, "I have a right to give you the sum which I conscientiously believe to be yours, at my house. Would you refuse it?"

"No," said César.

"Well, come to Alexander Crottat's this evening, so that we may have the matter settled; we can decide at the same time our marriage contract."

A demand for rehabilitation, by Derville's care, was presented to the procureur-general of the royal court of Paris.

During the month occupied by these formalities, and by the publication of the banns for the marriage of Césarine and Anselme, Birotteau was feverish and uneasy. He feared lest he should not live until the great day when judgment should be rendered. His heart palpitated, and he complained of dull pains in that organ, so exhausted by the emotions of grief that it could not well bear supreme joy.

Judgments of rehabilitation are so rare in Paris that there is scarcely one in ten years. Few people perceive the majestic solemnity of the grand staircase of the royal court, in the old Palace of Justice, at Paris; a staircase well placed to produce a striking effect. It is above the exterior peristyle which ornaments the palace court, and its door is in the middle of a gallery which leads at one end to the immense hall of the Pas Perdus, and at the other to the Sainte-Chapelle. The church of Saint Louis is one of the most imposing edifices in Paris, and its entrance, at the end of this corridor, has something of the somber and romantic about it. The great hall of the Pas Perdus, on the contrary, is full of light, and one cannot forget that the history of France is bound up with this hall. The fact that the staircase itself does not seem insignificant, in the midst of such surroundings, proves it to have a certain majesty of its own.

At the top is an immense room, the antechamber of the hall where the court holds its audiences. The bankrupt mounted this staircase surrounded by his friends, Lebas, then president of the tribunal of commerce, Camusot, Ragon, and the Abbe Loraux. They had come to his house, arriving just as he finished his toilet, and deeming it an honor to accompany him to the bar of the court. The escort filled the worthy man with a pleasure which gave him the necessary strength to bear the imposing scene. He found other friends waiting in the hall, where a dozeu lawyers were seated.

After Birotteau's lawyer had made the demand in a few words, Granville, the procureur-general, rose, and Birotteau's feelings can be imagined as he listened to the complimentary discourse, of which the following is an abridgment.

"Gentlemen," said the celebrated magistrate, "on the 16th of January, 1820, Birotteau was declared to be in a state of bankruptcy, by a judgment of the tribunal of commerce of the Seine. The failure was occasioned by no im-

prudence on the part of the merchant, neither was it by reason of speculation, nor of anything derogatory to his honor. We desire to be distinctly understood when we say that this misfortune was caused by one of those disasters which are the shame of justice and of the city of Paris. It was reserved for our century, where the bad leaven of revolutionary manners and ideas will long ferment, to view the notaries of Paris destroying the glorious traditions of preceding centuries, and causing in a few years as many failures as were known in two centuries, under the ancient monarchy. The thirst for rapidly won gold has taken possession of the ministerial officers, the guardians of the public fortune."

Then followed a tirade upon the liberals, the Bonapartists, and other enemies of the throne; and subsequent events have proved the magistrate to be correct in his apprehensions.

"The flight of a Parisian notary," he continued, "who took with him money that was left in his possession in trust by Birotteau, determined the ruin of that gentleman. The court rendered a judgment in the matter which proved to what an extent Roguin's clients were deceived by him. A bankrupt's certificate followed. We must observe, for the honor of M. Birotteau, that the proceedings have been remarkable for a purity which has never been met with in the scandalous failures by which the commerce of Paris is daily afflicted. The creditors of Birotteau found everything which the unfortunate man had possessed. They found, gentlemen, his clothing, his jewels, and effects which were purely personal, not only of his own, but also of his wife's, who abandoned all her rights to swell the amount of property. Birotteau, by this circumstance, proved himself worthy of the consideration which his municipal functions had awarded him; for he was at that time deputy to the mayor of the second ward, and had just received the decoration of the Legion of Honor, given on account of his devotion as a royalist who on the Vendemiaire fought on the steps of Saint Roch and stained them with his blood, as well as to the consular magistrate who was esteemed for his opinions and loved for his conciliatory spirit, and to the modest municipal officer who had just refused the honors of the mayoralty, and had indicated another as being more worthy of them; that other being the Honorable Baron de la Billardière, one of those noble Vendéans whom he had learned to esteem in darker days."

"That phrase is better than mine," whispered César to his uncle.

"And therefore the creditors, receiving sixty per cent, by reason of the total relinquishment by Monsieur Birotteau, his wife and daughter, of their property, testified to their esteem in the bankrupt's certificate which was granted by them to their debtor, and in which they remitted to him the remainder of his debts. The court is requested to listen to these testimonials."

And the procureur-general read the certificate aloud.

"After receiving this paper, gentlémen," he continued, "many merchants would have considered themselves freed from all obligation, and would have gone about their business as confidently as ever. Far from that, however, Birotteau, without losing heart, formed the project of winning his way to the point which brings him here to-day. Nothing has disheartened him; he has devoted all his earnings to the payment of his creditors, for family devotion has not been wanting—"

(Here Birotteau, weeping, pressed his uncle's hand.)

"His wife and daughter poured into the common treasury the fruits of their industry in agreement with the noble motive of Birotteau. Each of them has descended from the position which she formerly held, to take an inferior one. These sacrifices, gentlemen, should be highly honored, for they are the most difficult of all to make. This was the task which Birotteau imposed upon himself."

Here he read an abstract of César's accounts, designating the sums which had remained due, and the names of the creditors.

"Each of these sums, gentlemen," he continued, "has been paid, with interest. You will render to Birotteau, not the honor, but the rights of which he has been deprived, and you will do simple justice. Such spectacles are so rare here that we cannot refrain from expressing to Monsieur Birotteau our appreciation of his conduct, which has already received royal encouragement." Then he concluded in the formal style of the palace.

The court deliberated without going out, and the president rose to pronounce the judgment.

"The court," he said, in conclusion, "charges me to express to Birotteau its satisfaction in returning such a judgment. The clerk will call the next case."

Birotteau, already crowned with honor by the remarks of the illustrious procureur-general, was overwhelmed with delight as he listened to the solemn phrase pronounced by the first president of the first royal court of France. He could not leave his place at the bar, but stood as if nailed there, looking with a stupefied air at the magistrates, as at angels who had just opened the doors of social life to him; his uncle finally took him by the arm and drew him into the outer hall. César, who had not until now obeyed Louis XVIII., then mechanically put the ribbon of the Legion in his buttonhole, and was immediately surrounded by his friends, and escorted in triumph to the carriage.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked.

"To your home," replied Pillerault.

"No," returned César, "it is three o'clock. I want to go to the Bourse and use my right."

"To the Bourse," said Pillerault to the driver, for he had observed symptoms in his nephew which made him very uneasy, and he feared lest great joy should unsettle his brain.

Birotteau entered the Bourse arm-in-arm with his uncle and Lebas. His rehabilitation was already known. The first person who caught sight of the three merchants, with Ragon following them, was Du Tillet.

"Ah! my dear sir," he said, "I am delighted to hear that you are out of your trouble. I may have contributed to that result somewhat, by the readiness with which I permitted a feather of my wing to be plucked by Popinot. I am as pleased with your happiness as if it was my own."

"You can never experience that happiness in any other way," said Pillerault. "It will never happen to you."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Du Tillet.

"Oh, never mind," said Lebas, smiling at the revengeful malice of Pillerault, who, without knowing anything about it, looked upon the man as a rascal.

Matifat recognized César, and immediately the merchants of the highest standing surrounded him and paid him a genuine ovation; he received the most flattering compliments, and grasps of the hand which betrayed secret jealousy and remorse; for, of the hundred persons who walked about there, more than half had compromised with their creditors. Gigonnet and Gobseck, who were talking together in a corner, looked at the honest perfumer as physicians must have looked at the first *gymnote électrique* which was brought to their notice. This fish, armed with the power of a Leyden jar, is the greatest curiosity of the animal kingdom.

After having breathed the incense of his triumph, César again entered his carriage, to return to his home, where he was to sign the marriage contract between his beloved Césarine and the devoted Popinot. His laugh had a nervousness in it which made his three old friends uneasy.

One of the faults of youth is to deem every one as strong as itself. Like César and Constance, Popinot preserved in his memory a gorgeous image of the ball given by Birotteau. During these three years of trial, Constance and César, without saying anything to each other about it, had often in imagination heard the orchestra, looked again upon the gayly-clad assembly, and tasted once more the joy so cruelly punished, as Adam and Eve must often have thought of that forbidden

fruit which gave death and life to their posterity.

But Popinot could think of this fête without remorse, and with feelings of delight; Césarine, in all her glory, had promised to marry him while he was yet poor; during that evening, he had had the satisfaction of knowing that he was loved for himself alone. Therefore, when he had obtained possession of the restored apartment, in which everything had remained intact, and where the least things belonging to César and Constance had been religiously preserved, he dreamed of giving a ball of his own, a wedding ball. He had taken great delight in preparing this fete, imitating his patron in all necessary details. The dinner was to be served by Chevet, and the guests were very nearly the same as on the former occasion.

The Abbé Loraux took the place of the grand chancellor of the Legion of Honor; Lébas was to be present. Popinot invited Monsieur Camusot, as an acknowledgment of his kindness to Birotteau. Monsieur de Vandenesse and Monsieur de Fontaine took the place of Roguin and his wife. Césarine and Popinot had used great discretion in distributing their invitations for the ball. Constance took out her cherry-velvet dress in which, for a single day, she had blazed with such fleeting brilliancy. And Césarine delighted Popinot by appearing before him in the ball dress of which he had spoken so many times.

Therefore it was that Birotteau's home offered to him the enchanting appearance which he had known before for a single evening. Neither Constance nor Césarine nor Anselme had given a thought to the danger of such a great surprise for César, and they waited for him at four o'clock with an almost childish joy.

After the inexpressible emotions which his reappearance at the Bourse had caused him, this hero of commercial probity was unfitted for more excitement. When he re-entered his old home he saw, at the foot of the staircase, his wife, in her dress of cherry velvet, Césarine, the Count de Fontaine, the Vicomte de Vandenesse, the Baron de la Billardière, and the illustrious Vauquelin; and a mist came over his eyes, while his Uncle Pillerault, who had his arm, felt him shiver from head to foot.

"It is too much," said the old man to Anselme, "he will not be able to bear it."

Every one was so happy that they all attributed César's emotion to a very natural excess of joy. As he found himself once more in his own home, and saw again his salon and his guests, among whom were his wife and daughter in ball costume, all at once the heroic movement of the finale of Beethoven's grand symphony burst upon his head and heart. The ideal music thrilled and throbbed through his being, and sounded its trumpet notes in his brain, for which this was indeed the grand finale.

Overwhelmed by the inner harmony, he took his wife's arm and whispered in her ear in a stifled voice: "I am not well."

Constance, much alarmed, went with her husband into his own room, which he could scarcely reach, and where he sank into an armchair, saying, faintly:

"Monsieur Haudry, Monsieur Loraux!"

The Abbé Loraux came, followed by the guests in ball costume, who stood there in a stupefied group. In the presence of all of them, César pressed the hand of his confessor, and leaned his head against his kneeling wife. A blood-vessel had burst, and his last breath was cut short by the flow of the dark-red liquid.

"Behold the death of the just," said the Abbé Loraux, solemnly, with the divine gesture which Rembrandt has employed in his picture of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus ordered the grave to give up its prey; the holy priest speeded on its way to heaven the soul of a martyr to commercial honesty, now to be rewarded by eternal palms of glory.

IV.

THE MADNESS OF FACINO CANE.

At this time I was living in a little street which no doubt you do not know, the Rue de Lesdiguières; it begins in the Rue St. Antoine, opposite a fountain near the Place de la Bastille, and ends in the Rue de la Cerisaie.* The love of science had thrown me into a garret, where I worked all through the night; the day I spent at a neighboring library, the Bibliothèque de Monsieur. I lived frugally, accepting all the conditions of monastic life —conditions so necessary to men at work. When the weather was fine, the farthest I went was for a walk on the Boulevard Bourdon. One passion alone drew me out of my studious habits; but even that was a study in itself. I used to go and watch the manners of the faubourg, its inhabitants and their characters. As I was as ill-clad as the workmen and indifferent to appearances, I did not in any way put them on their guard against me; I was able to mix with them when they stood in groups, and watch them driving their bargains and disputing as they were leaving their work. With me observation had even then become intuitive; it did not neglect the body, but it penetrated further, into the soul, or rather, it grasped the exterior details so perfectly, that it at once passed beyond. It gave me the faculty of living the life of the individual upon whom it exercised itself, by allowing me to substitute myself for him, like the dervish in the Thousand and One Nights, who took possession of the body and soul of people over whom he pronounced certain words.

Between eleven and twelve o'clock at night I might fall in with a workman and his wife returning together from the Ambigu Comique; then I would amuse myself by following them from the Boulevard du Pont-aux-Choux to the Boulevard Beaumarchais. First of all, the good people would talk about the piece they had seen; then, *from the thread to the needle*, they passed on to their own affairs. The mother would drag along her child by the hand without listening to his cries or his questions. Then the pair would count up the money to be paid them next day, and spend it in twenty different ways. Then there were details of housekeeping, grumblings about the enormous price of potatoes, or the length of the winter and the dearness of fuel; and then forcible representations as to what was owing to the baker; at last the discussion grew acrimonious, and each of them would betray his character in forcible expressions. As I listened to these people I was able to enter into their life; I felt their rags upon my back, and walked with my feet in their wornout shoes; their desires, their wants—everything passed into my soul, or else it was my soul that passed into theirs. It was the dream of a man awake. I grew warm with them against some tyrannical foreman, or the bad customers who made them return many times without paying them. To be quit of one's own habits, to become another than one's self by an inebriation of the moral faculties, and to play this game at will—this formed my distraction. To what do I owe this gift? Is it a kind of second sight? Is it one of those qualities which, if abused, induce madness? I have never sought to find the cause of this power; I possess it and I use it, that is all. It is enough to know,

*Balzac actually did live in an attic at that place, and in great poverty.—EDITOR.

that, at that time, I had decomposed the elements of the heterogeneous mass called the People—that I had analyzed it in such a way that I could set their proper value on its qualities, good and bad. I knew already the possible usefulness of the faubourg, that seminary of revolution which contains heroes, inventors, men of practical science, rogues, villains, virtues and vices, all oppressed by misery, stifled by poverty, drowned in wine, worn-out by strong drink. You could not imagine how many unknown adventures, how many forgotten dramas, how many horrible and beautiful things lie hidden in this town of sorrow. Imagination will never reach the truth that lurks there, for no man can go to seek it out, the descent is too deep to discover its marvelous scenes of tragedy and comedy, its masterpieces which are born of chance.

I know not why I have kept the story I am about to relate so long without telling it; it is part of those strange tales stored in the bag whence memory draws them capriciously, like the numbers of a lottery. I have many more of them, as strange as this one, and as deeply buried; they will have their turn, I assure you.

One day my housekeeper, the wife of a workman, came to ask me to honor with my presence the marriage of one of her sisters. To make you understand what this marriage must have been like, I must tell you that I gave the poor creature forty sous a month; for this she came every morning to make my bed, clean my shoes, brush my clothes, sweep the room, and get ready my *déjeûner;* the rest of her time she went to turn the handle of a machine, earning at this hard work ten sous a day. Her husband, a cabinet-maker, earned four francs. But as they had a family of three children, it was almost impossible for them to get an honest living. I have never met with more thorough honesty than this man's and woman's. For five years after my leaving the district, *la mère Vaillant* used to come to congratulate me on my name day, and bring me a bouquet and some oranges—and she was a woman who could never manage to save ten sous. Misery had drawn us together. I have never been able to give her more than ten francs, often borrowed on purpose. This may explain my promise to go to the wedding; I relied upon effacing myself in the poor creatures' merriment.

The marriage feast, the ball, the whole entertainment took place on the first floor of a wine shop in the Rue de Charenton. The room was large, papered up to the height of the tables with a filthy paper, and lit by lamps with tin reflectors; along the walls were wooden benches. In this room were twenty-four people, all dressed in their best, decked with large bouquets and ribbons, their faces flushed, full of the excitement of the courtille, dancing as if the world were coming to an end. The bride and bridegroom were embracing to the general satisfaction, and certain *hee-hees!* and *haw-haws!* were heard, facetious, but really less offensive than the timid glances of girls who have been *well brought up.* The whole company expressed an animal contentment which was somehow or other contagious. However, neither the physiognomies of the company, nor the wedding, nor in fact any of these people, have any connection with my story. Only bear in mind the strangeness of the frame. Picture to yourself the squalid, red shop, sniff the odor of the wine, listen to the howls of merriment, linger awhile in this faubourg, among those workmen and poor women and old men who had given themselves up to pleasure for a single night! The orchestra was composed of three blind men from Les Quinze-Vingts; the first was violin, the second clarionet, and the third flageolet. They were paid seven francs for the night among the three. You may imagine they did not give Rossini or Beethoven at that price; they played what they chose or could; with charming delicacy, no one reproached them. Their music did such brutal violence to the drum of my ear that, after glancing round at the company, I looked at the blind trio—I was inclined to indulgence at once when I recognized their uniform. The performers were in the embrasure of a window, so that you were obliged to be

close to them to be able to distinguish their features; I did not go up immediately, but when I *did* get near them, I do not know how it was, but it was all over, the wedding party and the music disappeared; my curiosity was excited to the highest degree, for my soul passed into the body of the man who played the clarionet. The violin and the flageolet had both quite ordinary faces, the usual face of the blind, intense, attentive, and grave; but the clarionet's was a phenomenon such as arrests and absorbs the attention of a philosopher or an artist.

Imagine a plaster mask of Dante, lit up by the red glow of the quinquet lamp and crowned with a forest of silver-white hair. The bitter, sorrowful expression of this magnificent head was intensified by blindness, for thought gave a new life to the dead eyes; it was as if a scorching light came forth from them, the product of one single, incessant desire, itself inscribed in vigorous lines upon a prominent brow, scored with wrinkles, like the courses of stone in an old wall. The old man breathed into his instrument at random, without paying the least attention to the measure or the air; his fingers rose and fell as they moved the wornout keys with mechanical unconsciousness; he did not trouble himself about making what are called in orchestral terms *canards*, but the dancers did not notice it any more than did my Italian's two acolytes; for I was determined he must be an Italian, and he *was* an Italian. There was something great and despotic in this old Homer keeping within himself an Odyssey doomed to oblivion. It was such real greatness that it still triumphed over his abject condition, a despotism so full of life that it dominated his poverty. None of the violent passions which lead a man to good as well as to evil, and make of him a convict or a hero, were wanting in that grandly hewn, lividly Italian face. The whole was overshadowed by grizzled eyebrows which cast into shade the deep hollows beneath; one trembled lest one should see the light of thought reappear in them, as one fears to see brigands armed with torches and daggers come to the mouth of a cave. A lion dwelt within that cage of flesh, a lion whose rage was exhausted in vain against the iron of its bars. The flame of despair had sunk quenched into its ashes, the lava had grown cold; but its channels, its destructions, a little smoke, bore evidence to the violence of the eruption and the ravages of the fire. These ideas revealed in the man's appearance were as burning in his soul as they were cold upon his face.

Between each dance the violin and the flageolet, gravely occupied with their bottle and glass, hung their instruments on to the button of their reddish-colored coats, stretched out their hand toward a little table placed in the embrasure of the window and on which was their canteen, and offered a full glass to the Italian;—he could not take it himself, as the table was always behind his chair:—he thanked them by a friendly gesture of the head. Their movements were accomplished with that precision which is always so astonishing in the blind of Les Quinze-Vingts, it almost makes you believe that they can see. I went toward the three blind men, so as to be able to listen to them; but when I was close to them they began to study me, and not, I suppose, recognizing a workman, they remained shy.

"What country do you come from, you who are playing the clarionet?"

"From Venice," replied the blind man, with a slight Italian accent.

"Were you born blind, or did you become blind from—?"

"From an accident," he replied sharply; "it was a cursed cataract."

"Venice is a fine town; I have always had a longing to go there."

The old man's face lit up, his wrinkles worked, he was deeply moved.

"If I went there with you," he said, "you would not be losing your time."

"Don't talk to him about Venice," said the violin, "or you'll start our Doge off; especially as he has already put two bottles into his mouthpiece—has our prince!"

"Come, let's go on, père Canard," said the flageolet.

They all three began to play; but all

the time they took to execute four country-dances, the Venetian keep sniffing after me, he divined the excessive curiosity which I took in him. His expression lost the cold, sad look; some hope—I know not what—enlivened all his features and ran like a blue flame through his wrinkles; he smiled and wiped his bold, terrible brow; in fact he grew cheerful, like a man getting on to his hobby.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Eighty-two!"

"How long have you been blind?"

"Nearly fifty years," he replied, with an accent which showed that his regrets did not arise only from his loss of sight, but from some great power of which he must have been despoiled.

"Why is it they call you the Doge?" I asked.

"Oh, it's their joke," he said. "I am a patrician of Venice, and might have been Doge like the rest."

"What is your name then?"

"*Here,* le père Canet," he said. "My name could never be written on the registers different from that; but in Italian it is Marco Facino Cane, principe di Varese."

"Why! you are descended from the famous condottiere Facino Cane, whose conquests passed to the Duke of Milan?"

"*E vero,*" said he. "In those days the son of Cane took refuge in Venice to avoid being killed by the Visconti, and got himself inscribed in the Golden Book. But now there is no Cane, any more than there is a book." And he made a terrible gesture of extinct patriotism and disgust for human affairs.

"But if you were a Senator of Venice, you must have been rich; how did you come to lose your fortune?"

At this question he raised his head toward me with a truly tragic movement as if to examine me, and answered, "By misfortune!"

He no longer thought of drinking, and refused by a sign the glass of wine which the old flageolet was just at that moment holding out to him, then his head sank. These details were not of a kind to extinguish my curiosity. While these three machines were playing a country-dance, I watched the old Venetian noble with the feelings which devour a man of twenty. I saw Venice and the Adriatic; I saw her in ruins in the ruins of his face. I walked in that city that is so dear to its inhabitants. I went from the Rialto to the mouth of the Grand Canal, from the Quay of the Slaves to the Lido; I came back to the unique, sublime Cathedral; I examined the casements of the Casa d'Oro, each with its different ornament; I gazed at the ancient palaces with all their wealth of marble; in a word, I saw all those marvels with which the savant sympathizes the more because he can color them to his liking, and does not rob his dreams of their poetry by the sight of the reality. I followed back the course of the life of this scion of the greatest of the condottieri, and sought to discover in him the traces of his misfortunes, and the causes of the physical and moral degradation which rendered yet more beautiful the sparks of greatness and nobleness that had just revived.

No doubt we shared the same thoughts, for I believe that blindness renders intellectual communication much more rapid, by preventing the attention from flitting away to exterior objects. The proof of our sympathy was not long in showing itself. Facino Cane stopped playing, rose from his seat, came to me, and said one word—

"*Sortons!*"

The effect it produced on me was like an electric douche. I gave him my arm and we went out.

When we were in the street, he said to me: "Will you take me to Venice, will you be my guide, will you have faith in me? You shall be richer than the ten richest houses in Amsterdam or London, richer than the Rothschilds, as rich as the Thousand and One Nights."

I thought the man was mad; but there was a power in his voice which I obeyed. I let him guide me; he led me toward the trenches of the Bastille, as if he had eyes. He sat down on a very lonely place, where the bridge connecting the Canal Saint Martin and the Seine has since been built.

I placed myself on another stone in front of the old man, his white hair glistened like threads of silver in the moonlight. The silence, scarcely broken by the stormy sounds which reached us from the boulevards, the purity of the night — everything — combined to render the scene really fantastic.

"You speak of millions to a young man, and do you think he would hesitate to endure a thousand evils in order to obtain them! But you are not making fun of me?"

"May I die without confession," he said passionately, "if what I am going to tell you is not true. I was twenty—just as you say you are now—I was rich, handsome, and a noble. I began with the greatest of all madness—Love. I loved as men love no longer; I even hid in a chest at the risk of being stabbed to death in it, without having received anything more than the promise of a kiss. To die for *her* seemed to me life itself. In 1760 I became enamored of one of the Vendramini, a woman of eighteen, who was married to a Sagredo, one of the richest senators, a man of thirty, and mad about his wife. The lady and I were as innocent as two cherubim when *il sposo* surprised us talking of love. I was unarmed; he missed me; I leaped upon him and strangled him with my two hands, wringing his neck like a chicken. I wanted to fly with Bianca, but she would not follow me. It was so like a woman! I went alone. I was condemned, and my goods were confiscated to the benefit of my heirs; but I had rolled up and carried away with me five pictures by Tizian, my diamonds, and all my gold. I went to Milan, where I was left in peace, as my affair did not concern the State.

"Just one remark before I go on," he said, after a pause. "Whether the fancies of a woman when she conceives, or while she is pregnant, influences her child or not, it is certain that my mother during her pregnancy had a passion for gold. I have a monomania for gold, the satisfaction of which is so necessary to my life that, in all the situations I have found myself, I have never been without gold upon me. I have a constant mania for gold. When I was young I always wore jewelry, and always carried two or three hundred ducats about with me."

As he said these words he drew two ducats out of his pockets and showed them to me.

"I *feel* gold. Although I am blind I stop before jewelers' shops. This passion ruined me. I became a gambler for the sake of gambling with *gold*. I was not a cheat, I was cheated; I ruined myself. When I had no fortune left I was seized by a mad longing to see Bianca; I returned to Venice in secret, found her again, and was happy for six months, hidden in her house and supported by her. I used to have delicious dreams of ending my life like this. She was courted by the Provedittore; he divined he had a rival. In Italy we have an instinct for them. The dastard played the spy upon us and caught us. You may guess how fierce the fight was. I did not kill him, but I wounded him very severely. This event shattered our happiness; since then I have never found another Bianca. I have enjoyed great favors; I have lived at the court of Louis XV. among the most celebrated women; I have not found anywhere the noble qualities, the charms, the love, of my dear Venetian. The Provedittore had his servants with him; he called them; they surrounded the palace, and entered. I defended myself that I might die before Bianca's eyes—she helped me to kill the Provedittore. Before, this woman had refused to fly with me; but after six months of happiness she was ready to die on my body, and received several wounds. I was taken in a large mantle which they threw over me; they rolled me up in it, carried me away in a gondola, and put me into a cell in the dungeon. I was twenty-two. I held the stump of my sword so tight that they would have been obliged to cut off my wrist in order to take it away. By a strange chance, or rather, inspired by some instinct of precaution, I hid this fragment of metal in a corner as a thing of possible use to me. My wounds were dressed, none of them were mortal; at

twenty-two a man recovers from anything.

"I was to die by beheading. I feigned sickness to gain time. I believed I was in a cell bordering on the canal; my project was, to escape by undermining the wall, and risk being drowned by swimming across the canal. My hopes were founded on the following calculations. Every time the jailer brought me food I read the notices fastened on the walls, such as—*The Palace; The Canal; The Subterranean Prisons.* Thus I succeeded in making out a plan which caused me some little apprehension, but was to be explained by the actual state of the ducal palace, which has never been finished. With that genius which the longing to recover one's liberty gives a man, I succeeded, by feeling the surface of a stone with the tips of my fingers, in deciphering an Arabic inscription, by which the author of the work warned his successors that he had dislodged two stones of the last course of masonry and dug eleven feet underground. To continue his work, it would be necessary to spread the fragments of stone and mortar caused by the work of excavation over the floor of the cell itself. Even if the jailers and Inquisatori had not felt satisfied, that, from the construction of the building, it only needed an external guard, the arrangement of the cells, into which was a descent of several steps, allowed the floor to be gradually raised without attracting the jailer's notice. This immense labor had been superfluous at least for the unknown person who had undertaken it; its incompletion was an evidence of his death. That his exertions might not be lost forever, it was necessary that a prisoner should know Arabic. Now I had studied the Oriental languages at the Armenian convent. A sentence written behind the stone told the unhappy man's fate; he had died a victim to his immense wealth, which was coveted and seized by Venice. It would require a month to arrive at any result. While I worked, and during those moments when I was prostrate with fatigue, I *heard* the sound of gold; I *saw* gold before me; I was dazzled by diamonds! Now, listen! One night my blunt sword touched wood. I sharpened the stump, and began to make a hole in the wood. In order to work, I used to crawl on my belly like a snake. I stripped myself and worked like a mole, with my hands in front, and using the rock itself as a fulcrum. Two nights before the day I was to appear before my judges, I determined to make one last effort during the night. I bored through the wood, and my sword touched nothing. You can imagine my amazement when I put my eye to the hole! I was in the paneled roof of a cellar, in which a dim light enabled me to see a heap of gold. In the cellar were the Doge and one of the Ten. I could hear their voices. I learned from their conversation that here was the secret treasure of the Republic, the gifts of the Doges and the reserves of booty called *The last hope of Venice,* a certain proportion of the spoils of all expeditions. I was saved!

"When the jailer came, I proposed to him to help me to escape and to fly with me, taking with us everything we could get. He had no cause to hesitate; he agreed. A ship was about to set sail for the Levant; every precaution was taken. I dictated a plan to my accomplice, and Bianca assisted in carrying it out. To avoid giving the alarm, Bianca was to join us at Smyrna. In one night we enlarged the hole and descended into the secret treasury of Venice. What a night it was! I saw four tuns full of gold. In the first chamber the silver was piled up in two even heaps, leaving a path between them by which to pass through the room; the coins formed banks, which covered the walls to the height of five feet. I thought the jailer would have gone mad; he sang, he leaped, he laughed, he gamboled about in the gold. I threatened to throttle him if he wasted the time or made a noise. In his delight he did not at first see a table where the diamonds were. I swooped down upon it so skillfully that I was able to fill my sailor's vest and the pockets of my pantaloons. My God! I did not take a third part. Under this table were in-

gots of gold. I persuaded my companion to fill as many sacks as we could carry with gold, pointing out to him that it was the only way to avoid being discovered in a foreign country. The pearls, jewelry, and diamonds, I told him, would lead to our being found out. In spite of our greed, we could not take more than two thousand livres of gold, and this necessitated six journeys across the prison to the gondola. The sentinel at the water-gate had been bought with a bag containing ten livres of gold; as for the two gondoliers, they believed they were serving the Republic. At daybreak we departed. When we were out at sea and I thought of that night, when I recalled the sensations which I had experienced, and seemed to see again that immense treasure, of which I calculated I must have left thirty millions in silver and twenty millions in gold, besides several millions in diamonds, pearls, and rubies; a feeling of madness rose within me; I had gold fever.

"We were landed at Smyrna, and immediately re-embarked for France. As we were going on board the French vessel, God did me the favor of relieving me of my accomplice. At the moment I did not think of all the bearings of this mishap; I was greatly rejoiced at it. We were so completely enervated that we remained in a state of torpor, without speaking, waiting until we were in a place of safety to play our parts at our ease. It is not to be wondered at that the fellow's head had been turned. You will see how God punished me. I did not consider myself safe until I had disposed of two-thirds of my diamonds in London and Amsterdam, and realized my gold dust in negotiable specie. For five years I hid myself in Madrid; then in 1770 I came to Paris under a Spanish name, and lived in the most brilliant style.

"Bianca was dead.

"In the midst of my pleasures, when I was enjoying a fortune of six millions, I was struck with blindness. I conclude that this infirmity was the result of my sojourn in the prison and my labors in the dark, if indeed my faculty for seeing gold did not imply an abuse of the powers of vision and predestine me to lose my eyes. At this time I loved a woman to whom I had resolved to link my fate. I had told her the secret of my name; she belonged to a powerful family, and I had every hope from the favor shown me by Louis XV.; she was a friend of Madame du Barry. I had put my trust in this woman; she advised me to consult a famous oculist in London; then, after staying in the town for some months, she deserted me in Hyde Park, robbing me of the whole of my fortune and leaving me without resources. I was obliged to conceal my name, for it would have exposed me to the vengeance of Venice. I could not invoke any one's help; I was afraid of Venice. The spies whom this woman had attached to my person had made capital out of my blindness.—I spare you the history of adventures worthy of Gil Blas. —Your Revolution came; I was obliged to enter at Les Quinze-Vingts; this creature got me admitted after having kept me for two years at Bisetre as insane; I have never been able to kill her, I could not see to, and I was too poor to pay another hand. If, before I lost Benedetto Carpi, my jailer, I had consulted him on the situation of my cell, I should have been able to find the treasury again and return to Venice when the Republic was abolished by Napoleon. However, in spite of my blindness, let us go to Venice! I will find the door of the prison, I shall see the gold through the walls, I shall *feel* it where it lies buried beneath the waters; for the events which overturned the power of Venice are such that the secret of the treasury must have died with Vendramino, the brother of Bianco, a doge who, I hoped, would have made my peace with the Ten. I addressed notes to the First Consul, I proposed an agreement with the emperor of Austria; every one treated me as a madman! Come, let us start for Venice, let us start beggars; we shall come back millionaires; we will buy back my property, and you shall be my heir, you shall be Prince of Varese."

I was thunderstruck at this confidence, at the sight of that white head; before the black waters of the trenches of the

Bastille sleeping as still as the canals of Venice, it assumed in my imagination the proportions of a poem. I gave no answer. Facino Cane no doubt believed that I judged him, like all the rest, with disdainful pity; he made a gesture expressive of all the philosophy of despair. Perhaps his story had carried him back to those happy days at Venice; he seized his clarionet and played with the deepest pathos a Venetian song, a barcarolle in which he recovered all his first talent—the talent which was his when he was a patrician and in love. It was as it were a *Super flumina Babylonis*. My eyes filled with tears. If some belated passers-by chanced to be walking along the Boulevard Bourdon, I daresay they stopped to listen to this last prayer of the exile, this last regret of a lost name, mingled with memories of Bianca. But gold soon got the mastery again, and its fatal passion quenched the glimmering of youth.

"That treasure!" he said; "I see it always, waking and in my dreams; I take my walks there, the diamonds sparkle, I am not so blind as you think; gold and diamonds lighten my night, the night of the last Facino Cane, for my title passes to the Memmi. Good God! the murderer's punishment has begun betimes! *Ave Maria!*" . . .

He recited some prayers which I could not hear.

"We will go to Venice," I exclaimed, as he was getting up.

"Then I have found my man," he cried, with a glow upon his face. I gave him my arm and led him back; at the door of Les Quinze-Vingts he pressed my hand; just then some of the people from the wedding were going home, shouting enough to blow one's head off.

"We will start to-morrow?" said the old man.

"As soon as we have got some money."

"But we can go on foot; I will ask alms—I am strong, and when a man sees gold before him he is young."

Facino Cane died during the winter after lingering for two months. The poor man had caught a chill.

END OF VOLUME TWO.

DATE DUE	
MAY 20 1994	
SEP 01 1994	
Nov. 29, 1994	
2/21/95	
MAR 18 1995	
MAY 19 1995	
Aug 17, 1995	
Nov 30 '95	
May 28, 1996	

GAYLORD PRINTED IN U.S.A.

SFTS Library
2 Kensington Road
San Anselmo, CA 94960
For renewals call (415) 258-6635
All items are subject to recall.

28582 7-10-53 xx

15
BY5
B21
C35
Vol. II

LIBRARY
OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
SAN ANSELMO
CALIFORNIA

GTU Library
3 2400 00322 1342